



# **The Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee**

## **Welsh Government's evidence paper**

17 September 2025

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## Overview

1. My aim as Minister has been that every person in Wales should have the right to access, create, participate in, and see themselves reflected in the cultural and sporting activity of our nation. I am particularly interested in supporting access to culture for the under-privileged and the working class. During my previous appearances before the Committee, I have outlined my priorities as Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership and how my portfolio aims to deliver against the First Minister's priorities including the focus on education, the economy, tackling poverty and climate change.
2. This paper sets out an update on several issues requested by the Committee:

## Priorities for Culture - Culture & Heritage

### *Funding*

3. A £15m investment package has been allocated to support the implementation of the Priorities for Culture in 2025-26. This is a ring-fenced allocation within the Welsh Government's BEL6170 Support for Local Culture and Sport budget line.

### *Year one priorities*

4. On launching the Priorities for Culture, I outlined the following areas of focus for year one:
  - Culture being inclusive, accessible and diverse
  - A focus on improving opportunities for children and young people
  - The workforce
  - Supporting the sector to address the climate and nature emergencies
  - Support for intangible cultural heritage and digital improvements.

### *Implementation*

5. Implementation across all five ambitions has been spearheaded by three major funding schemes, two capital and one revenue. In terms of capital funding, the Arts Council for Wales is investing £8m in arts organisations across Wales and the Priorities for Culture Capital Grant scheme will invest more than £3.3m in projects across local museums, libraries and archives, and over £1m in projects at our national bodies. This is on top of over £11m in additional capital funding allocated to our national bodies in 2025-26, which also delivers against the Priorities for Culture.
6. In addition to the Culture Capital Grant Scheme, supporting local museums, archives and libraries, we also recently launched the Enhanced Local Sector support scheme which is expected to see over £2m revenue invested in local areas in its first year, which allows communities to focus on the ambitions most relevant to them. It encourages local authorities and cultural trusts to work collaboratively on partnership bids that make a bigger difference and have a lasting impact locally.

7. Examples of specific initiatives to deliver **ambition 1** (Inclusive, accessible, diverse) include:

- The launch of Cadw's [£1 Universal Credit tickets](#) available to all those in receipt of qualifying Universal Credit and other named benefits.
- Awarding additional funding to expand the House of Memories Cymru project to include content specifically representing Wales' Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.

8. Activities related to delivering **ambition 4** focused on children and young people include:

- Working with the Arts Council of Wales to expand the oversubscribed ['Have a Go'](#) and ['Go and See'](#) programmes. A £150,000 proposal has been developed to improve access for children with additional learning needs and schools in areas of high deprivation, with the award letter scheduled to be issued in September 2025.
- Allocating £100,000 to the [Stars on the Shelf scheme](#) to increase access to reading and creative opportunities for young people in libraries, including author engagement to inspire participation.
- Expanding and developing Cadw's [Young Custodians Scheme](#) - engaging more schools, supporting the delivery of projects and events and enhancing participants' experience and enabling Cadw to support school transport costs, enabling more pupils, particularly those from underrepresented groups such as Ethnic Minorities & Youth Support Team Wales (EYST) to access heritage sites during the autumn term.

In addition to the earmarked Priorities for Culture funding, I have also allocated £55,000 to the Group for Education in Museums ([GEM](#)) to launch a [Museum Visits Bursary Scheme](#), covering up to 100% of visit costs for state-maintained schools and colleges to non-National museums across the country.

9. Implementation relating to **ambition 15**, which recognises the need for a resilient, futureproof cultural and heritage workforce focuses on the workforce, has included:

- Commissioning research to explore the experiences and needs of employed staff, volunteers, and freelancers across the culture and heritage sectors. This evidence will inform actions to support skill development and qualifications, helping shape roles that are sustainable and impactful in a thriving sector.
- Addressing the shortage of heritage craft skills by providing funding to Cadw to strengthen the heritage skills pipeline, including an apprentice carpenter and three stonemasonry trainees.

10. Implementation relating to **ambition 16**, supporting the sector to address the climate and nature emergencies includes :

- The delivery of carbon literacy training and new guidance.
- Cadw trialling the use of climate adaptation pathways to manage the risks from the impact of climate change to the properties in its care.
- The National Library of Wales will host a climate and nature emergencies Programme Manager role, which will support delivery of strategic projects across the culture sector.

11. Implementation relating to **ambition 11**, Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), includes:

- Preparing a launch of the call out for items of ICH practice for inclusion on a Wales and then a UK ICH inventory. A celebration of ICH in Wales is being arranged for November, working alongside Amgueddfa Cymru.

12. Implementation relating to **ambition 13**, digital, has included:

- Progressing plans to establish a new training programme which will build digital capacity across the culture sector, including targeted support on digital innovation and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

### *Monitoring*

13. We are working with our Arm's Length Bodies to reflect the Priorities for Culture in their operational plans. They will provide updates to Welsh Government as part of our quarterly meetings and monitoring of progress and impact will become part of our regular engagement. Organisations who receive Priorities for Culture funding and those receiving other Welsh Government funding administered by the Culture Division, Cadw and the Arts Council of Wales, must demonstrate how the funding will be used to support the Priorities for Culture.

## **Broadcasting**

14. Creative Wales continues to work closely with stakeholders including the UK Government Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Ofcom and public service broadcasters on broadcasting policy. Recent discussions have covered the Future of TV Distribution project and BBC Charter Renewal. Earlier this year, a joint event was held with Ofcom to support Welsh input into Ofcom's review of Public Service Media, and discussions are underway to identify other opportunities to work with the regulator in this way on other topics. Discussions are also underway to support work to explore in more detail the five pathways to devolution set out in the Broadcasting Expert Panel's report. On content, productions recently supported by Creative Wales include Dope Girls, Mr Burton, Havoc, Out There, Cleddau/The One That Got Away and Young Sherlock.

## **Public interest journalism**

15. The Wales Public Interest Journalism Working Group continues to meet to provide advice to us on the actions to support the long-term sustainability of Welsh and English language public interest journalism in Wales. This was supported by a refreshed terms of reference agreed at the May 2025 meeting of the Group. The Creative Wales Public Interest Journalism Fund was launched in July 2025. It is anticipated approved projects will be announced in September 2025.

## **Euro 2028 readiness**

16. Work is progressing well on EURO 2028. We are working closely with UK & Ireland Ltd (the company established for operational delivery) UEFA and governments across the five nations and local partners to ensure the successful delivery of the tournament. Our £10m capital investment through Sport Wales in 2025-26 continues to support new facilities and improvements to existing facilities in many communities across Wales.

## **Welsh Government response to charging for exhibitions report**

17. I set out my response to the Committee's report on 16 July after carefully considering the five recommendations, and I am grateful to the Committee for its work.
18. Thanks to our funding, visitors can continue to enter all seven of Amgueddfa Cymru's sites for free. The Committee's report highlights the positive impact our free entry policy has had, with visitor numbers doubling and the proportion of lower socio-economic groups visiting expanded to around 30 per cent, as set out in the Thurley Report. In my response I set out my committed to retaining free access to our national collection and that our Final Budget for 2025-26 includes an 8.5% increase for Amgueddfa Cymru compared to the previous year's revenue budget.
19. I also set out the variety of ways we help organisations host temporary exhibitions, including through our capital investment in Wales' cultural and heritage assets, which is now more than three times that of a decade ago. Through the Government Indemnity Scheme, which is available to both national and non-national museums, we provide an alternative to commercial insurance, enabling art and cultural objects to be borrowed from private lenders or non-national institutions for display or research purposes.
20. I set out how I am supportive of Amgueddfa Cymru seeking to increase its financial sustainability through appropriate income generation in addition to its grant-in-aid. As is the case at other national museums in the UK, Amgueddfa Cymru can choose to charge for the tour at Big Pit National Coal Museum as a premium experience. In line with the arm's length principle, we will provide Amgueddfa Cymru with the time it needs to gather further data so it can take

an evidenced-based decision on how it's charging proposals can best contribute to financial sustainability whilst protecting equality of access.

## **Celf - National Contemporary Art Gallery**

21. Our capital investment in the galleries that comprise Celf, the National Contemporary Art Gallery for Wales, was completed as planned in March 2025. A celebratory event to mark the completion of the work was held at the Pierhead Building on 16 July. The event was well attended and demonstrated the work delivered and the achievements of Celf so far with positive feedback received from those involved.
22. Many of the galleries participating in the network have already held exhibitions drawing on contemporary works from the national collection. I am pleased that I have been able to visit and view a number of these and look forward to doing so in the future. There are further exhibitions currently ongoing or planned in the coming months that will have a positive impact and ensure that contemporary art reaches many more people across Wales than was previously possible.
23. Due to the tight timescale for the delivery of the capital works, meaning that not all tasks associated with the completion of a capital project were undertaken, funding for a transition period for the project has been provided. At the same time, a funding contribution towards the operational costs of Celf has been provided in response to a request received from the partners for its first year, with agreement in principle also being provided for a second year of funding while plans to access wider sources of funding are developed and delivered.

## **Funding of Culture and Sport**

24. The final budget for 2025-26 included an additional £9.6m revenue funding for arts, culture, creative industries, heritage and sport in Wales. Our additional revenue investment returns our stakeholders to their revenue budget positions in 2023-24 prior to the reduction that was implemented as part of the 2024-25 budget.
25. Additionally, there has been an £18.4m uplift in the capital allocation compared to 2024-25. This is three times what it was a decade ago. This includes supporting projects like the redevelopment of Caerphilly Castle, the extensive refurbishment of Theatr Clwyd and the Football Museum for Wales in Wrexham Museum and grants towards conservation of historic buildings and monuments across Wales.
26. This increase also allows us to continue our investment plans revitalising many of the building and assets of our Arm's Length Bodies, completing projects as set out within our Programme for Government but also new investments in local cultural asset, in line with the priorities and ambitions set out in our Priorities for Culture. The additional capital budget to Sport Wales

has a focus on investing in sporting facilities, an important intervention to support the preventative health and wellbeing agenda.

27. Our budget allocation to Sport Wales is only part of the overall picture of how the whole Welsh Government spends money on the preventative benefits of sport and physical activity.
28. Specific funding streams in other departmental budgets also are aimed at prevention, including funding through our Healthy Weight Healthy Wales strategy, the Sustainable Communities for Learning and the Community Facilities programmes.
29. This Government has consistently demonstrated its commitment and support for culture, defined in its broadest sense, across a range of policy areas.
30. It is important to remember that as well as the funding that is channelled from my portfolio, there is considerable investment in culture across the Welsh Government. For example, £1.5m to support Amgueddfa Cymru's transition to sustainable energy through the Energy Service this year. We also support showcasing and celebrating Welsh culture through Event Wales – over £5m in this financial year and we invest in programmes such as the National Music Service and Creative Learning as well as the funding that is specifically allocated to support and promote the Welsh language.

## **Review of the relationship between Cadw and the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales**

31. Following the Cadw Governance Review in December 2023, a recommendation was made to reassess the relationship between Cadw and the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales (the Royal Commission). A Working Group was established in September 2024 to consider options, including enhanced collaboration and a potential merger. After external and staff consultations, the Working Group, consisting of senior representatives from Welsh Government, the Royal Commission, Trade Unions and an independent heritage expert, submitted its report in September 2025. The report evaluated three options: maintaining the current structure, pursuing strategic collaboration, or merging the Royal Commission and Cadw.
32. The report of the working group determined that both merger and closer collaboration may have advantages for the future provision of national historic environment services. The emerging preference was for a merger and there was a belief that this would deliver greater benefits. However, it was also felt that further detailed scoping would be required, particularly regarding the means to provide assurance for the future protection of the National Monuments Record for Wales. Legislation was identified as the preferred approach to achieve this protection.
33. I am currently considering the report's findings and recommendations and acknowledge the desire for legislation to protect the National Monuments

Record. As this cannot be achieved within the current Senedd term, I have asked officials to identify and deliver improved collaboration between the two organisations. While there is already effective cooperation in many areas, such as historic place names and record management, there may be further potential to strengthen this partnership and explore additional areas of joint working.