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Cenedlaethau'r
Dyfodol
Cymru

Future
Generations
Commissioner
for Wales

 the audience agency

Culture for Future Generations.

A Culture Act for Wales: Green Paper

Report commissioned by the Future
Generations Commissioner for Wales
and written by The Audience Agency.

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On 1st of March 2025, the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales called for a Culture Bill for Wales, and he included this as a key recommendation in the Future Generations Report 2025. To support that call for a Culture Bill, the Commissioner asked The Audience Agency, an independent research and development non-profit, to prepare a Green Paper to stimulate a discussion about the future of culture in Wales. You are invited to share your views on this important subject through [this form](#) by the 6th of April 2026. We will collate responses and present them to the new Welsh Government.



Executive summary

In September 2025, the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales commissioned The Audience Agency to deliver a paper answering the question: “What is the best way to ensure that culture is protected, promoted and prioritised by public bodies in Wales for the well-being of future generations?”

Evidence shows that culture is in crisis in Wales, with major cuts in funding since the Well-being of Future Generations Act became law in 2015. Among the 250 stakeholders and members of the public consulted as part of this research, there was broad consensus that the status quo is not working.

Existing legislation has not protected culture effectively. More needs to be done to ensure that the foundation of the Well-being of Future Generations Act results in lasting improvement for future generations. There is now a major opportunity to weave culture more deeply into Welsh life and the work of Welsh public bodies.

A Culture Bill could provide an opportunity to demonstrate the importance of culture and put it on a statutory footing, bringing it into line with other devolved areas like the Welsh language or active travel.

However, a Culture Bill is not the only lever to ensure that public bodies protect, promote and prioritise culture. Many of the aspects that would be required to make a Culture Bill a success could be addressed through other means. An overly vague and general Culture Bill without sufficient attention to implementation is likely to achieve little real change.

Key actions to ensure that culture is protected could include:

- Defining culture in line with international definitions to ensure a shared understanding
- Establishing cultural rights – in law or in guidance – that can provide a foundation for decision-making and action by public bodies
- Establishing duties on public bodies to ensure that Welsh people are able to exercise their cultural rights
- Pursue civic involvement in decision-making around culture
- Make budgetary commitments, such as in the “percent for culture” model

What is clear is that there is not one single solution to protect culture in Wales. The Spanish Cultural Rights Plan provides inspiration for an integrated package of measures – statutory and non-statutory – based on a foundation of cultural rights. Although more research is needed, this is a promising direction for future travel.

Introduction



In the ten years since the Well-being of Future Generations Act was passed, culture in Wales has faced serious challenges. Over the past decade, the Welsh Government’s revenue funding for culture and sport has decreased by 17%, and local authority funding by 28%.¹

The Future Generations Report 2025 concluded that “culture is in crisis.” In response, the Future Generations Commissioner has called upon Welsh Government to introduce a Culture Bill, “making culture a statutory requirement for public bodies and safeguarding our cultural rights.”²

In September 2025, the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales commissioned The Audience Agency to deliver a paper answering the question: “What is the best way to ensure that culture is protected, promoted and prioritised by public bodies in Wales for the well-being of future generations?” This research has been undertaken with just eight weeks from initiation to reporting. Despite the tight timeline, it has involved consultation with over **250 people**, including **100 responses** to a call to evidence. (See Appendix 2 for further detail.)

This paper considers a range of options for protecting, promoting, and prioritising culture in Wales. Some of these options might fall within a potential future Culture Bill for Wales – such as bringing cultural rights into law or making certain types of cultural provision a statutory requirement – but many could also be implemented in different ways. The paper also explores other kinds of options beyond legislation and statutory measures.

These questions are not straightforward and there are still significant political decisions to be made. However, the report aims to stimulate debate and help build consensus for ways forward for better protecting, promoting and prioritising culture in line with the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

¹ <https://senedd.wales/media/ekumt3dy/cr-ld16899-e.pdf>

² <https://futuregenerations.wales/discover/about-future-generations-commissioner/future-generations-report-2025/>

Background

In 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations Act was passed by the Welsh Assembly. It was revolutionary in that it presents culture as a well-being goal in itself: something with intrinsic value, not merely a tool for the achievement of other goals.



■ Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.³

This explicit inclusion of culture reflects a position adopted by the British Council and others in international sustainable development policy that culture is ‘the missing pillar’ of sustainable development – not represented internationally in the Sustainable Development Goals to 2030.

It might have been expected that having culture as an explicit goal within this legislation would underline the centrality of culture to integrative, future-facing policymaking in Wales – and the extent to which it is resourced and supported.

Yet a 2025 report from the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee of the Senedd notes that although capital funding has nearly doubled, there has been “a 17 per cent real terms reduction in revenue funding for culture and sport between 2014-15 and 2024-25” and that “[b]etween 2013-14 and 2023-24, local authority revenue funding of libraries, culture, heritage, sport and recreation reduced by 28 per cent in real terms.” The Committee Chair, Delyth Jewell MS, described this as a “consistent and brutal under-funding of culture and sport.”⁴

³ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/2/section/4> ⁴ <https://senedd.wales/media/ekumt3dy/cr-ld16899-e.pdf>

Background

This assessment has supported by the sector itself. Commenting in 2024 on funding cuts, the chief executive of Arts Council Wales warned that if trends continue, “there will be no professional sector in 10 years.”⁵ In 2024, creative industries unions Equity, Bectu, Musicians Union, Writers’ Guild of Great Britain and National Union of Journalists came together “to call for urgent action to address the current decimation of Welsh arts and culture.”⁶ A 2025 Creu Cymru Sector Snapshot report states that “the sustained pressure that the [performing arts] sector has experienced over the last 14 years has left it severely depleted,” making a direct equation between funding cuts and reduced sector activity.

It further notes that:

The performing arts runs through and underpins areas of society in unique and intrinsic ways, including health, education, community and social care. Funding cuts don’t only affect the arts industry but have direct impact on the wellbeing and vibrancy of communities and Welsh society.⁷

The Future Generations Report 2025 concludes that financial pressures on public bodies have resulted in:

- A shrinking cultural sector, limiting access to the arts for many communities.
- Job insecurity and redundancies across the creative and cultural workforce.
- Cuts in academic cultural courses.
- Higher entrance fees, reduced opening hours, and reliance on volunteers in venues and cultural sites.
- Public funding being withdrawn from key cultural landmarks.⁸

With **7 in 10 people** in Wales taking part in arts and cultural activities, culture would appear to still be important to most people’s and communities’ lives. But arts attendance for adults and children and young people has not recovered to pre-pandemic levels.⁹

The Well-being of Future Generations Act is not the only legislation with relevance to Welsh culture. However, laws putting the provision of cultural services on a statutory basis have also had mixed results. The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 requires local authorities to “provide a comprehensive and efficient library service” and to “encourage[e] both adults and children to make full use of the library service.”¹⁰

⁵ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cd0gkky220yo> ⁶ <https://www.equity.org.uk/news/2024/equity-join-union-call-to-save-welsh-culture>

⁷ https://creucymru.com/sites/default/files/2025-01/Creu%20Cymru%20Sector%20Snapshot%20Research%20December%202024_0.pdf

⁸ <https://futuregenerations.wales/discover/about-future-generations-commissioner/future-generations-report-2025/> ⁹ Figures quoted from

Future Generations Report 2025 and 2024 ¹⁰ <https://research.senedd.wales/research-articles/the-future-of-public-leisure-and-library-services/>



“With 7 in 10 people in Wales taking part in arts and cultural activities, culture would appear to still be important to most people’s and communities’ lives.”

Background

But this has not stopped Welsh libraries from closing or cutting staff. In 2017 the BBC reported that “**One in three of Wales’ libraries** has closed or changed hands in the last seven years due to budget cuts,” with further closures planned.¹¹ Most recently, Caerphilly Council proposed to close **10 libraries**. This decision is now on hold pending judicial review, demonstrating that the statutory duty exerts some influence over the allocation of resources by local authorities, but not perhaps as much as the lawmakers who created the legislation intended.¹²

The former Librarian of the National Library of Wales has called the Public Libraries and Museums Act “toothless” and outdated, and called for a new Act to “reaffirm the statutory basis of the library service, and... define more unambiguously what a satisfactory service would consist of.”¹³

Published in 2025, the Welsh Government’s Priorities for Culture seeks to “place culture where it belongs: at the heart of Welsh life.”¹⁴ However, it has been critiqued as offering “broad statements of intent... rather than tangible commitments,” and lacking a concrete plan for implementation.¹⁵



Issues around public resourcing are not necessarily specific to culture. A 2025 report by the Auditor General finds that although the Well-being of Future Generations Act has influenced the discourse in Wales, it “is not driving the system-wide change that was intended.”¹⁶ The report highlights the challenges around joined-up working by public bodies to set and achieve well-being objectives. It underlines the importance of both funding and ‘implementation’ to ensure that legislation – and the WFGA in particular – achieves its desired outcomes.

¹¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-38654997> ¹² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/czxr3y1egko> ¹³ <https://gwallter.com/libraries/a-new-public-libraries-act-for-wales.html> See also: <https://www.iwa.wales/agenda/2023/01/do-we-need-a-wales-libraries-act/> ¹⁴ <https://www.gov.wales/priorities-culture-html> ¹⁵ <https://research.senedd.wales/research-articles/welsh-government-priorities-for-culture-when-is-a-strategy-not-a-strategy/> ¹⁶ https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/No_time_to Lose_Lessons_from_our_work_under_the_Well-being_of_Future_Generations_Act.pdf

Background

Existing legislation has not protected culture effectively. This may be due to shortcomings in legislation – and may point to the need for further legislation – but equally underlines that future legislation may be equally ineffective without attention to joined-up policy and implementation.

Sharing this evidence of Welsh culture in crisis is not to suggest that the situation is irretrievable. Another way of looking at it is to say there is a perception that things can no longer go on as they are – that it is time to make a significant change in the way Wales defines, engages with and supports cultural life.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act was a landmark not merely in Wales, but internationally. However, there is now a recognition that, when it comes to culture, more needs to be done to ensure that the foundation of the WFGA results in lasting improvement for future generations. There is now a major opportunity to weave culture more deeply into Welsh life and the work of Welsh public bodies. The question is how.

“It is time to make a significant change in the way Wales defines, engages with and supports cultural life.”



Challenges and barriers

The consultation carried out under this commission in September and October 2025 confirms broad agreement from consultees that culture is “in crisis”. Consultees are critically concerned about funding for and investment in culture. However, responses identified many wider challenges and barriers to people in Wales enjoying a rich cultural life.

All quotes below are from the call for evidence that was conducted as part of the consultation.



■ What is culture? Who is creative? What is culture for?

There is confusion over what culture is.

“I think we need to think very hard about what the arts are and what makes them different from other creative disciplines like design, research etc. Those decisions should then influence policy.”

Many report that significant numbers of people in Wales believe culture is “not for me.” This is likely because many people perceive ‘culture’ to mean traditional high culture such as opera or ballet which do not form part of their own cultural lives. This sentiment can equally apply to the galleries or arts centres round the corner.

Challenges and barriers

“...culture, music, arts and culture being see[n] as a ‘special’ thing that only certain people do, and only certain types of culture have value - rather than something core to our being, experienced in many different ways”

“sense of belonging, [being] included and relevant”

This is reinforced by the definitions and framing of ‘culture’ within the WFGA and other Welsh policy. But focus group participants who viewed themselves as “not engaged with culture” often proved to be passionate about cultural issues. Exclusive definitions of culture are seen as significant barriers to many people enjoying their basic rights to a cultural life:

“Lack of validation and / or understanding of cultural norms & expressions of culture within communities.”

“Worry that they won’t fit in, that they have to wear something special, that they won’t ‘get it.’”

Creativity itself can be seen as exclusive – for ‘creative people’ – instead of as an essential component of humanity. This is more likely when people don’t know others who engage in creative or cultural activities or work. The idea of “personal creative development” beyond formal education or paid work is not widely understood or appreciated. This is reinforced by mainstream – including social – media where there is a lack of representation of ordinary people being creative beyond the less relatable representations of “being a pop star”.

Overcoming such structural and class barriers is possible but:

“...community arts and producing organisations are being underfunded, meaning they either have to charge or raise ticket prices, or reduce provision, limiting people’s access.”

The conflation within the WFGA outcomes of Welsh language with culture – and the framing that this carries with it – is not always helpful to cultural diversity:

“I live in a Welsh language area, and the language is important to the culture, but it is not the total of it. Opportunities to celebrate and engage in the diversity of the local people are what is needed, with Black, Queer and Disabled led work happening locally.”

The idea of ‘cultures’ rather than a singular ‘culture’ is a useful principle:

“barriers to mixed ethnicity embracing new cultures whilst still respecting Welsh culture... more schemes to help integrate different minorities making them feel more a part of Welsh community.”

“The idea of “personal creative development” beyond formal education or paid work is not widely understood or appreciated.”

Challenges and barriers

There is confusion over what culture is for and the WFGA framing of all outcomes as ‘well-being’ does not help with this – albeit that its definition is meant to be broader than most common interpretations of the term:

“...we need all our cultural and artistic services to be recognised for their impact (not just well-being, but this is an important outcome) and universal appreciation for the role they play in society for the good of the people of Wales.”

Whilst resources are regarded a crucial to a successful cultural future for Wales, so is ‘vision’.

■ Who decides?

Decisions about cultural provision are too often being made for communities rather than with them.

“People with lived experience of inequality, disability, neurodivergence, poverty, migration, or rural isolation are often invited to “consult,” but rarely empowered to lead or to make decisions.”



■ Culture as a ‘nice to have’ – for those with more resources

Culture has come to be viewed as a luxury rather than an essential part of life.

“Arts and Culture are not seen as important or valuable assets within society. It has become socially acceptable to treat arts and culture as inessential or even insignificant to collective benefit... We must change the impression that the arts are subsidiary.”

Poverty and inequality make it difficult for people to engage with culture because of the costs of admission to activities, as well as the complexities, time consumption and costs of travel (see below).

Challenges and barriers

“Coming from a lower socio-economic background, and having worked in the arts for many years, I often am put off from being able to attend a cultural event due to the cost of the ticket.”

“For those who would benefit most from the cohesion this activity engenders and the support it add[s] to well-being it may become an unaffordable luxury and that is problematic in and of itself.”

“For those living in poverty, even free events can be costly, due to transport costs.”

This is especially acute for younger people – the future generations which are the focus of this paper:

“Going to things on a regular basis locally is just inaccessible due to such high costs. In England things are much cheaper. Future generations are missing out due to these high costs.”

■ Barriers to equality of access

Many respondents cited a “lack of equity for all” to having a cultural life and participating in the culture of people’s communities.

People need to overcome “barriers [to] entering establishments...[include] knowing you belong” depending on “how accessible [facilities] are, [how] welcoming”. Often this is compounded by a “lack of information” and a “lack of... awareness of access or activities” and “access [being] dependent on people around you knowing and understanding what opportunities there are”.

“often people don’t know about the local archives as a resource they can use to investigate their history or the history of the area they live in”

So, achieving greater equity isn’t just about the availability of cultural activities. As a precondition to engagement are both people’s awareness that these activities exist as well as their accessibility – in every sense – to all kinds of people. This is a known problem – a “lack of audience/public engagement, always speaking to the same people...” to which there are known solutions through “actively promot[ing] access”.

“For those living in poverty, even free events can be costly, due to transport costs.”



“Achieving greater equity isn’t just about the availability of cultural activities.”

Challenges and barriers

“There are... structural and societal barriers to people accessing creative and cultural provision (whether active and participatory or more passive) - these are well documented, and efforts should always continue to focus on improving access for those members of our communities that continue to be underserved.”

But such solutions require focus and expertise. ‘Audience development’ and ‘public engagement’ in culture are not just marketing, nor are they the same as public engagement with other publicly supported services, education or research.

Provision is “patchy across Wales” – a “postcode lottery”. Coupled with this, lack of affordable transport is one of the most serious barriers to engagement with culture and is more acute in rural areas. Public transport in many areas is expensive, infrequent, and stops running too early in the evening for people to attend and return from events. Many do not have cars. For others the travel and parking cost of a cultural activity would be prohibitive for them.

■ Cultural and creative learning and activities for children and young people

Schools – and education more broadly – have the potential to make access to culture near universal at a critical life stage which can set the conditions for future cultural engagement.

“I’ve noticed the reason that many people in... Powys don’t access the cultural activities on offer is because they haven’t done it before. They didn’t do it as children.”

The new Curriculum for Wales includes Expressive Arts as one of six Areas of Learning and Experience, with “creativity and innovation” treated as an integral skill for achieving its four key purposes.¹⁷ Arts Council Wales also offers creative learning programmes in schools.¹⁸

However, many consultees still feel that children and young people do not have adequate access to a cultural education in school or via out of school activities. Despite revisions to the curriculum, a sense remains that schools are focused on producing skilled workers rather than rounded individuals.

Areas of specific concern include Welsh and local history,¹⁹ as well as making music and art. Lack of resources, information and travel are recurring themes. “Tightened budgets for schools” is cited as a cause for reductions in music education as well as a lack of “awareness of the existence of...instruments and the settings in which they are embedded”. Parents or carers having to self-finance long round trips for their children to take part in group music activities is a specific example.

Intergenerational interactions – perhaps already limited by shifts in media consumption habits which differ significantly between age groups – within culture are limited:

“Lack of intergenerational design - older and younger people are often isolated from each other in cultural life, limiting shared learning and belonging.”

¹⁷ <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/expressive-arts/> ¹⁸ <https://arts.wales/our-impact/how-we-help-make-art/creative-learning>

¹⁹ Although the study of Welsh history is now compulsory. See: <https://www.gov.wales/written-statement-welsh-history-curriculum-wales>

Challenges and barriers



Respondents suggested that children and young people should be taught at school about the cultural rights they are due in Wales due to the UK being a party to a number of international agreements.

Mainstream media – including streaming TV services – can often substitute in people’s business lives for more niche culture. Film, TV, radio, audio and written content about Welsh history, language and culture and about non-mainstream culture in general can help to inspire and engage people of all ages. But for young people especially, just producing this content isn’t enough if they are unlikely to seek it out. It needs to ‘cut through’ the noise of social media, digital content, messaging and other apps.

■ The cultural sector: challenges and support

The cultural sector is facing a financial crisis.

“Costs are [t]ight... these sectors need to employ people which [cost] is ever increasing and funding has in real terms been cut, so the gap between [the] fund[ed] amount and cost is widening all the time.”

“the arts sector is on its knees, it has never fully recovered from Covid and changes in audience behaviour, and combined with Arts Council cuts and local authority cuts, pretty much everyone is massively struggling”

As are adjacent, culture-supporting sectors:

“Many of the places that have kept parts of the live industry afloat - live music venues, hospitality venues and the like - are themselves facing an existential threat from hugely increased costs”

Public support to culture varies widely.

“There is a sporadic approach to how [culture]... is supported and regarded”

Challenges and barriers

“Massive funding gaps for cultural third sector organisations, and a lack of provision for those wanting to work in the arts [but] not across the board, some councils... seem to have good support”.

Public resources would appear to be disproportionately focused on a particular view of culture that may not correspond with many voters’ or taxpayers’ view of it.

“Funding is focused on the prestigious (predominantly white) institutions (e.g large theatres or opera) where the majority of people in Wales access culture in some form through the smaller, more accessible community arts organisations.”

The situation in rural Wales is more acute:

“Organisations serving rural Wales often operate on minimal core support, making it hard to plan, retain skilled staff, or build meaningful local partnerships.”

A more enterprising approach can address funding shortfalls, but this can come at a cost to accessibility:

“Many areas of culture can engage in more commercial activity, but this changes its focus and presents then its own barrier to attendance or participation.”

There is a confusion of what public funding is for – what it is investing in. It can be seen just as subsidy of activity, support to non-profit organisations or careers development. But this is too short-term and blinkered a view. Thinking long-term, as the WFGA encourages all to do, investment in culture needs to be investment into different kinds of ‘cultural capital’ that reaps benefits over the long term, perhaps best seen as a kind of civic infrastructure.

“...sustaining cultural rights means addressing not just access but infrastructure: investment in people, places, and long-term relationships that allow culture to take root and grow in every community across Wales.”

In terms of specific artforms, respondents cite a “need for large scale contemporary visual arts galleries that programme touring [of] diverse exhibitions”, for greater “Investment in dance - funding, space for making... seeing [and] programming” and “financial support for artists to create work, to network together, to develop shared spaces (such as artists studios) to create work”.

Not all the infrastructure to support creative and cultural activities are necessarily ‘cultural’ – some is more generally social:

“Lack of a community hub/community centre. Lack of youth club provision.”
[suggested barrier]

“A more enterprising approach can address funding shortfalls, but this can come at a cost to accessibility.”

Challenges and barriers

■ Creative and cultural careers and talent

Financial considerations affect the accessibility of cultural and creative careers as well as the participation of different publics in cultural activities:

“Funding and finance are huge barriers - at present only those who already have money, or who are supported by other means can afford to try to make a living in the creative industries.”

Creative careers are fragile and precarious, particularly for freelancers – “working within culture and the arts is considered economically risky.”

Creative and cultural work could be more inclusive:

“Neuro-exclusion and ableism - cultural spaces and working practices are rarely designed with sensory, cognitive, or communication diversity in mind.”

AI is seen as a threat to the viability of such careers.

Career progression is essential to developing and retaining talent and this requires creative freedom, infrastructure and support:

“Amazing things can emerge from small scale talent, which is not always tied to community, but rather needs the freedom to purely create. People need affordable space to practice and the opportunity to build community and awareness of their activity.”



Opportunities

To redefine and reframe culture in a more inclusive, accessible way:

“It must be a consideration in public bodies, educators, and organisations that their decisions and language used around arts and culture have the effect of impacting social behaviour to see culture as lesser.”

To make more of Wales and Welsh culture, addressing the challenge of:

“A lack of appreciation of the value of culture to the communities and brand of Wales.”

To change Wales’ society and democracy through culture:

“Democratising culture means embedding co-production, participatory governance, and neuro-inclusive design at every level of cultural policy and practice in Wales.”

To remember to make the best use of culture throughout society and economy, our personal and professional development and health:

“We forget that it is the arts sector that takes on the responsibilities of social wellbeing not covered by statutory provision. We forget that it is the Arts that take on the provision of creative education when we cannot provide it in our schools. We forget that the arts are an economically viable industry that can offer an enormous amount of benefits socially, economically and in terms of collective health.”



Opportunities

To have culture and creativity supported through public bodies and budgets which are not exclusively cultural – including in health and care, as mentioned by this respondent, but also education and transport:

“Arts Council Wales are the main funder with limited budgets, so demand outstrips provision. The cost should be shared across sectors, including health and social care. The benefits of the arts cuts across all the social determinants of health. Welsh Government and public bodies need to be ringfencing prevention monies to support the arts.”

To support people’s individual cultural and creative lives as well as supporting the formal cultural sector:

“It would be great to have ‘Creative Mentors’ - people who can help people with specific things - I have a load of stories that are half finished because I get to around 15,000 words and I get stuck, having a mentor to help me through that barrier would be great.”

To better support the development and inclusivity of creative and cultural workers, start-ups and other organisations:

“There is a role to play for intermediary and sector-support here... many of these are independent non-profit organisations which are often working at grass-roots level in underserved communities, but as organisations rely on external funding to pay core-costs. With better support those organisations can directly provide networking and training and best practice guidance, but can also ensure that underserved and remote communities can benefit”

To make more of tourism to support culture as well as local creative and wider economies:

“...many tourists visit to enjoy the beaches and mountains [but] leave with little understanding of the rich Welsh culture... local shuttle bus services could provide a convenient link for visitors to move from hot-spot beauty locations to a local museum, art gallery, cafe or small business shopping area. This would encourage them to diversify their experience.”

“Welsh Government and public bodies need to be ringfencing prevention monies to support the arts.”

What are the options?

Consultations with stakeholders and members of the public have brought forward a diverse range of opportunities to improve cultural life in Wales. The question is how to take advantage of those opportunities. Given the integrated ways of working required by the Well-being of Future Generations Act it is important to take a holistic rather than piecemeal approach to cultural policy.

This analysis begins by examining the options around a potential Culture Bill – and the pros and cons to introducing one. However, it goes on to consider broader options, some of which might be either statutory or non-statutory. It is important to note that there is potential for an even wider approach to culture, of which a Culture Bill might form only a part. The Spanish Cultural Rights Plan (see case study) is an extremely relevant example.



What are the options?

Case Study



The Spanish Cultural Rights Plan 2025-2030 is described as the “first initiative of its kind in Europe,”²⁰ drawing inspiration from both existing international treaties and covenants non-binding declarations like the Fribourg Declaration on Cultural Rights.²¹

The justifications offered for its introduction bear comparison to the Welsh context:

- Culture not viewed as sufficiently urgent/important
- Structural inequalities forming the main barriers to access
- Precarity in the sector
- Paucity of policy, especially long-term policy
- Limited attention paid to wider benefits of culture

The Plan is an integrated package bringing together:

- the concept of culture as a human right – which is foundational;
- strategic priorities;
- legislative commitments;
- budgetary commitments;
- and proposed governance mechanisms including participatory practice.²²

²⁰ <https://www.ejiltalk.org/the-future-is-a-cultural-act-spains-first-plan-on-cultural-rights-a-new-paradigm-for-europe/> ²¹ <https://droitsculturels.org/observatoire/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/05/declaration-eng4.pdf> ²² <https://planderechoscultureles.cultura.gob.es/dam/jcr:bbb5e0c7-55da-4354-aa66-364caa9c1853/resumen-ejecutivo-plan-ddcc-eng.pdf>

What are the options?

■ Why a Culture Bill?

A Culture Bill could provide a foundation for a new, integrated approach to culture. It could demonstrate that culture is a priority by putting it on a statutory footing, bringing culture into line with other key devolved areas, such as health, education, and active travel. Such a bill could be compared to the recently passed Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025, which sought to provide a statutory basis for language targets, place duties upon Welsh Ministers, and create accountability for linguistic planning at different levels of government.²³

A Culture Bill could enable:

- Fairer access to culture across Wales, ending a ‘postcode lottery’ approach where access varies depending on local authority
- A more culturally democratic approach to culture by shifting emphasis towards the experience of culture within communities, avoiding the accusation that policy and funding is driven by a cultural sector lobby
- More integrated planning and implementation by public bodies that considers the substance and specifics of people’s cultural and creative lives
- Better use of public funding, with public bodies outside the culture sector using culture to meet wider wellbeing goals
- Legal challenges, if the Bill fails to deliver its ambitions.

Giving evidence to the Culture Committee of the Senedd, Jane Richardson, Chief Executive for Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales, offered a clear vision:

“a Culture Act isn’t about protecting the institutions of Wales. That’s not what it’s for; it’s about safeguarding the cultural access and enjoyment of Wales within the context of future generations.”

“This is as much about local choirs meeting in village halls. It’s about... the fact that Wales should lead the world on culture. We are the country that captured culture as a sustainable development principle. We led the way with future generations. We can do this with culture.”²⁴

That is the opportunity that a Culture Bill could potentially provide.

²³ <https://business.senedd.wales/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?llid=43934> ²⁴ <https://record.senedd.wales/Committee/15662>



“A Culture Bill could provide a foundation for a new, integrated approach to culture.”

What are the options?

■ Legislation isn't everything

A Culture Bill is not the only lever to ensure that public bodies protect, promote and prioritise culture. Many of the aspects that would be required to make a Culture Bill a success could be addressed through other means – such as policy actions like training, communications or non-statutory guidance, or amendments to statutory guidance for the Well-being of Future Generations Act (and potentially other legislation).

Past evidence shows clearly that legislation has not always been effective. An overly vague and general Culture Bill without sufficient attention to implementation is likely to achieve little real change. There is also a risk of a 'tick-box' compliance-based approach by public bodies that fails to embrace the spirit of the legislation and then aims for the minimum allowed. Criticisms have legitimately been made of 'gestural' legislation designed to send a message rather than really change things.

In considering the potential elements within a Culture Bill, we examined the potential roles of public bodies and formats of public funding. Broadly, public bodies can have powers, duties and within these the ability to disburse funds.



What are the options?

Whilst bodies can have duties to provide a service, equally services can be commissioned or there can be a broader duty to ensure a level of supply – which may be in relation to defined minimum service levels or can be more flexibly related to evidence of demand in any area. Bodies can take supervisory role over the satisfactory fulfilment of duties including the delivery of services, usually be paired with monitoring a range of things – like the fulfilment of duties, demand or broader situation like the health of a particular sector – and some kind of reporting to an overseeing body like the Welsh government and/or the public. Public bodies can have duties to consult specific stakeholders – or powers to take their views into account – including powers or even duties to convene one or more groups or bodies. Finally, they can issue guidance or standards – to supplement existing legislation and policy – which can have a statutory basis.

In terms of formats of public funding, whilst there can be a tendency to default to thinking about revenue grants or commissioning services, there are many other uses of public funds to support policy goals including loans or recoverable grants, guarantees and other incentives to reduce risk for other investors and quasi-commercial finance on more advantageous terms than the market will provide. For more detail see Appendix 2.

We also reviewed the duties which the ‘UK government’ has under the international instruments to which it is a party, as potential source material for duties within a Culture Bill. These duties are outlined in Appendix 3. These reviews challenge many people’s assumption that the substance of a Culture Bill would necessarily be ranged around a duty on local authorities to themselves deliver cultural services. There are many other options.

To be effective, a Culture Bill would need to bring together guiding principles (whether via cultural rights or another approach); new duties and obligations for public bodies; resourcing to support implementation; and granular, specific statutory and non-statutory guidance to enable culture to be addressed in a system-wide way. It would need to place duties and obligations upon all public bodies in Wales, not just central government and/or local authorities.

“To be effective, a Culture Bill would need to bring together guiding principles.”

What are the options?

■ Defining culture

To ensure that culture is protected, promoted and prioritised, there should be a clear shared understanding of what it means. Some stakeholders have a sense that the Well-being of Future Generations Act defines culture. In fact, there is no supporting definition of culture within the act, although the relevant well-being goal gives some sense of its shape:

A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation

Despite common assumptions about what “culture” is – both inside the sector and among members of the public – there is no consensus. We can identify some obvious points of uncertainty: is heritage part of culture? Or sport? Or the creative industries? Beyond this, too many people feel that culture is not “for them,” because they see it as an exclusive practice, not relevant to their daily lives.

Stakeholders have been clear that it would be risky to move forward with a Culture Bill if it does not establish a shared understanding of culture, offering a definition of scope that makes it clear what it is that public bodies are expected to support.

UK cultural policy – including Welsh policy to date – commonly tends to describe culture as relating to certain sectors of the economy. For example:

- **Welsh Government Priorities for Culture** make specific reference to “the arts, museums, libraries, archives and the historic environment sectors” – excluding sport and the creative industries, while noting that “there is a clear link between their work and cultural well-being.”²⁵
- Supporting material created by the **Future Generations Commissioner** to present the **Well-being of Future Generations Act** uses culture “as a term to encompass archives, arts, heritage, language, libraries, museums, play and sport.”²⁶

This is a suitable approach if the main purpose behind the Culture Bill is to support a sector of the economy. However, there are good reasons for treating culture as more than an industry.²⁷ The sector-by-sector model of culture commonly used in UK cultural policy can be a barrier to joined-up policy, because it is less immediately obvious how or why other sectors should contribute to the health of the culture sector.

²⁵ <https://www.gov.wales/priorities-culture-html> ²⁶ <https://futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Culture-Wales-Topic-5.pdf>

²⁷ See, for example, Justin O'Connor, Culture is Not An Industry (Manchester, 2024).

What are the options?



Definitions of culture do not have to be based on the structure of the cultural sector or the way government happens to work, although they often are. They can centre the experiences of individuals and communities. This approach is more in line with the interdisciplinary, sustainable development approach of the Well-being of Future Generations Act²⁸ – as well as being more in line with international definitions of culture.

The definitions of culture contained in UN conventions and declarations take a people-first approach, focusing on the place of culture in the lives of communities and societies. Ironically, it is this exact people-centred approach that the British Council encourages policymakers and practitioners in other countries to adopt,²⁹ whilst the concept is much less understood or adopted within the UK itself.

UNESCO's working definition from 1982 was adopted by the UK in 2001 in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity:

Culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.³⁰

The 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2024 (to which the UK acceded in 2024), defines intangible cultural heritage as:

the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.³¹

²⁸ See, for example, the Welsh Centre for Public Policy paper on cultural well-being, designed to support Public Service Boards to address this theme. <https://www.wcpp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Cultural-Well-being-WCPP-Evidence-Briefing-Paper.pdf> ²⁹ https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/ch4ig_essays_torreggianiwoodley_web.pdf ³⁰ Adopted by the UK and other member states in the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity <https://adatabase.ohchr.org/IssueLibrary/UNESCO%20Universal%20Declaration%20on%20Cultural%20Diversity.pdf> based on the 1982 Mexico Declaration on Cultural Policies by UNESCO which was also agreed by the UK ³¹ 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage to which the UK acceded in 2024 <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention#part1>

What are the options?

This includes “oral traditions and expressions, including language; performing arts; social practices, rituals and festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; [and] traditional craftsmanship.”³²

There are risks to defining culture in law. Too narrow a definition could leave out important aspects of cultural experience, privileging certain types of culture over others. It could support the view that there is one Welsh culture rather than a diversity of cultures and cultural expressions within Wales that are worthy of support. Too wide a definition could be unworkably vague.

Still, drawing on these definitions could form a useful basis for proposals for policy and legislation on culture that specifically reflect the role of culture in the sustainable development of Wales and its impact on future generations in Wales. This could help drive integration of culture across public policy and public services – and shift the focus to the experiences and well-being of individuals and society.

In theory, such a definition does not require legislation – it could appear within policy. But if it doesn't appear within legislation, then it will be just another definition amongst many emanating from an actor in the field – the Office of the Future Generations Commission or Welsh Government, for example – in a crowded space, with many other bodies working with their own definitions. This route would provide no requirement to understand or adopt the definition. And it could change as political directions change.

If it were defined, within a Culture Bill – standalone or amending the Well-being of Future Generations Act or statutory guidance to it – future legislation referring to culture could by default use this definition and existing legislation could be amended through the bill to also use this definition. Passing a bill requires a higher and more formal degree of consensus than agreeing policy so the definition would come with that authority. Getting time to remove or amend legislation takes time and political capital, and so the definition would stand a better chance of withstanding changes in policy and government.

■ Statutory options

Bring international conventions relating to culture into Welsh law

The Welsh Government Priorities for Culture sets out the ambition that “Cultural democracy and cultural rights are central to culture in Wales.” Our recent consultation showed overwhelming consensus that people in Wales should be able to enjoy a broad range of cultural rights.

³² Ibid

What are the options?

The UN Special Rapporteur for Cultural Rights – who has been consulted in the production of this paper – offers the following definition:

Cultural rights protect the rights for each person, individually and in community with others, as well as groups of people, **to develop and express their humanity, their world view and the meanings they give to their existence and their development** [emphasis in original] through, inter alia, values, beliefs, convictions, languages, knowledge and the arts, institutions and ways of life.

Cultural rights also protect access to heritage and resources that allow such identification and development processes to take place.

The mandate on cultural rights does not aim to protect culture or cultural heritage per se, but to promote the conditions allowing all people without discrimination to access, participate and contribute to all aspects of cultural life in a continuously developing manner.³³

Some cultural rights already exist in UK law. Rights around Intellectual Property can be viewed as a type of cultural right, as can the right to the freedom of expression.³⁴

Beyond these, the UK is a signatory to a number of international conventions that involve both cultural rights (for citizens) and duties and obligations (for public bodies).³⁵ Upholding these rights – often phrased in discussions of international law as a duty to “respect, protect and fulfil” – is already likely a responsibility of Welsh Government as it is a responsibility of the UK government and culture is a delegated competency to Welsh Government. However, because the conventions are not incorporated into domestic law, there is limited awareness of these rights and limited ability to ensure that they are enforced.



³³ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-cultural-rights/mapping-cultural-rights-nature-issues-stake-and-challenges> ³⁴ Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, incorporated into UK law by the 1998 Human Rights Act. <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/human-rights/human-rights-act/article-10-freedom-expression> ³⁵ These include the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. (See Appendix 3 for a summary of the relevant aspects of these conventions.)

What are the options?

The maximalist option would be to directly incorporate international conventions into Welsh law. Precedent has been set by the Scottish Government, which is seeking to incorporate international human rights legislation into Scots law.³⁶ A Supreme Court challenge in 2021 led to a rethink around the approach, but there are still plans to move forward with a Human Rights Bill.³⁷

Direct incorporation is not the only option. Other options are potentially more workable and more effective:

- **Indirect incorporation**, which “gives a treaty some effect in national law through another legal mechanism.”³⁸ For example, statutory guidance for Well-being of Future Generations Act and/or other legislation – with respect to culture or other sectors such as health, transport etc – could require due regard to be taken of the rights and duties³⁹ within international conventions.
- **Piecemeal incorporation:** Welsh legislation could establish rights to culture that are based on existing treaty provisions, without bringing the treaties themselves into Welsh law.
- **Additional rights.** A Culture Bill need not be constrained by treaties and conventions to which the UK is already a signatory. It could establish rights specific to the Welsh context. It could also be inspired by wider international thinking such as the Fribourg Declaration on Cultural Rights, or Barcelona’s Cultural Rights Plan.

There is a risk that rights could be too vague to be enforceable and/or justiciable. They would need to be supported by additional statutory and non-statutory guidance; a bill could also establish specific compliance duties for Welsh public bodies to ensure that rights are respected and enforced and to have regard to them in their policymaking and decision-making.

Publicity and education around cultural rights would also be an important part of implementation.

“Cultural rights also protect access to heritage and resources that allow such identification and development processes to take place.”

³⁶ See a briefing paper on the part played by cultural rights: <https://www.hrcscotland.org/resources/final-the-right-to-cultural-life-in-scotland-march-2023-1.pdf> ³⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/summary-human-rights-bill-scotland-discussion-paper/pages/1/>

³⁸ <https://www.law.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-12/Different%20types%20of%20incorporation%20infographic%5B1%5D%20-%20ACC.pdf>

³⁹ The conventions also include duties on public bodies to uphold and support the enjoyment of cultural rights. These are summarised in Appendix 3.

What are the options?

■ Establish statutory duties to ensure provision

This would likely involve statutory duties on public bodies (primarily local authorities) to provide, or ensure the provision of, a minimum level of cultural services.

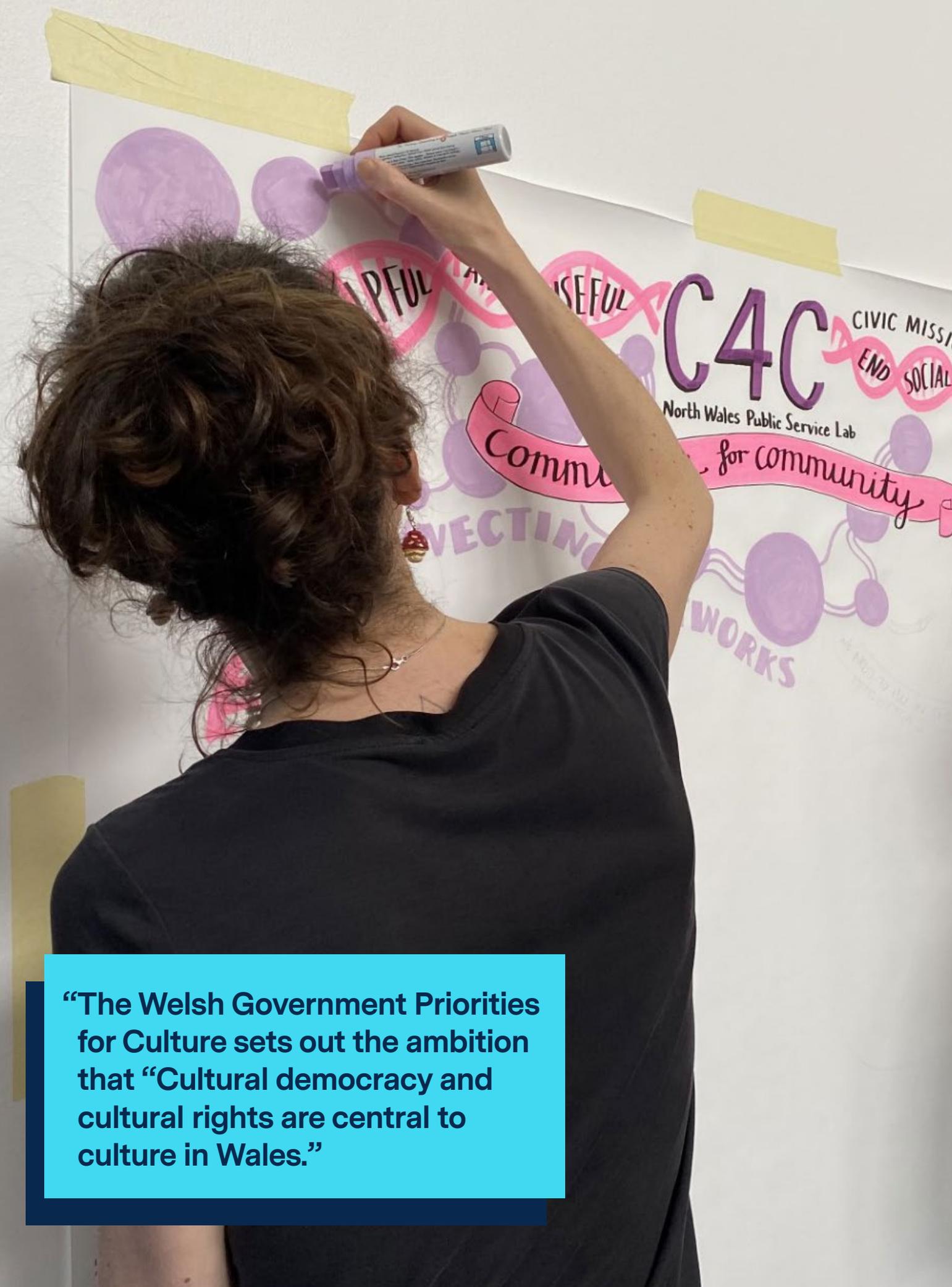
This could follow the existing model that applies to library and archive services – which is a duty on local authorities to themselves delivery a cultural service. However, there is significant scepticism from stakeholders about this model, due to its perceived lack of success at stopping library closures. Stakeholders fear that a minimum level of provision would be viewed as sufficient, and public bodies will have no impetus to go beyond this. This model also means a focus on public institutions and cultural organisations rather than the experiences of communities or the cultural activities of individual practitioners.

The default position of local authorities having to provide, ignores the reality on the ground of a highly mixed model of cultural provision – with third sector organisations, businesses, artists and other freelancers and civil society (community and voluntary organisations and individuals and communities) already providing many of the opportunities for people to enjoy a rich cultural life. Local authority involvement in such opportunities already ranges across:

- Providing the cultural services themselves
- Commissioning cultural services from others
- Providing buildings, faculties or other resources to support provision
- Subsidising the delivery of such services through grants to cultural organisations and/or community groups.

Alternatively, local authorities – and other public bodies – could be given the duty to ensure provision that is sufficient to enable people to exercise their cultural rights. This would follow a similar model to the Childcare Act 2006 and its implementation in England and Wales.⁴⁰ This approach reflects the plurality of cultural provision and creative activity across the public, private and third sectors as well as those very much led by civil society. It also recognises that culture is traditionally subject to the ‘arm’s length principle’ in English and Welsh cultural policy.⁴¹

⁴⁰ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/notes/division/6/1> ⁴¹ <https://www.culturenet.cz/coKmv4d994Swax/uploads/2018/08/The-Arm%E2%80%99s-Length-Principle-and-the-Art-Funding-System.doc>



“The Welsh Government Priorities for Culture sets out the ambition that “Cultural democracy and cultural rights are central to culture in Wales.”

What are the options?



The Active Travel (Wales) 2013 Act⁴² is a useful reference for how to use targeted legislation to define and create a web of duties around a specific kind of provision to achieve well-being and other outcomes.

Inspired by these acts, the package of duties ‘to ensure sufficient provision’ on local authorities (or other public bodies) could include:

- to map cultural provision against needs/wants of local communities;
- to report on granular cultural indicators and evaluate cultures contribution to well-being outcomes;
- to ensure provision whether that is delivered by themselves, public bodies, charities, businesses or civil society;
- to build capacity within and between organisations, creative and cultural workforce and civil society, including volunteers;
- and to intervene to provide support through funding, training, promotion or otherwise where local provision does not meet local needs.

Duties to promote and provide information are such a significant duty that they deserve to be considered separately to this package.

⁴² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2013/7/contents>

What are the options?

■ Establish statutory duties to promote culture

As is noted above a broad concept of ‘promotion’ is necessary to ensure that people participate in cultural and creative activities. Merely ensuring that cultural services and other opportunities to be creative are available do not mean that they will be taken up or be equitably used beyond those who already confidently engage in culture or creativity or have well-being outcomes, especially for those who are otherwise disadvantaged.

This kind of promotional role for local authorities mirror similar roles in legislation for active travel and childcare and family services provision. International conventions to which the UK is a party likely already impose or at least imply duties on Welsh Government⁴³, given that culture is a delegated competency. These duties include:

- To promote cultural **diversity** – including through educational and **public awareness** programmes
- To support the **diffusion** of culture
- To create an **environment** which encourages individuals and groups to have access to diverse cultural expressions
- To integrate culture into **all levels of policies** supporting sustainable development in particular fostering the... **promotion** of cultural diversity⁴⁴.

As noted above, public bodies can do more than provide services or fund others to provide services. Other policy levers include leadership, convening, advocacy, promotion and the use of human and physical resources such as buildings and facilities.⁴⁵ This would reflect a culture change in the bodies themselves towards recognising and understanding – a clearer and more citizen-centred idea of – culture. Hence the focus up front on redefining it away from sectors of the cultural industries and the arbitrary boundaries between the remits of public bodies.

Finland’s Act on Cultural Activities in Local Government 166/2019 states it is “the duty of the local authorities to provide cultural activities,” and offers a list of activities necessary to fulfil this duty.⁴⁶ Most of these focus on promotion and fostering the conditions for cultural life, as opposed to direct provision.

⁴³ See Appendix 3 for more detail. ⁴⁴ See Appendix 4 for more detail. ⁴⁵ See p28 of <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/creative-places-supporting-your-local-creative-economy> ⁴⁶ “In order to fulfil this duty, local authorities shall:

1. promote equal access to and broad use of cultural and art services ;
2. create conditions for professional artistic work and activities;
3. promote active involvement in the arts and culture and related civic activities;
4. offer opportunities for goal-oriented artistic and cultural education covering different forms and fields of culture and art;
5. promote the preservation and use of cultural heritage, and activities that foster and develop local identities;
6. promote the arts and culture as part of residents’ health and wellbeing, inclusion and community engagement, and local and regional vitality;
7. promote cultural interaction and international activities, and carry out other artistic and cultural activities.”

<https://www.fnlex.fi/en/legislation/translations/2019/eng/166>

What are the options?

■ Statutory guidance for implementation

Implementation will be crucial to ensure the success of a Culture Bill. Therefore, guidance for public bodies about the way they consider and embed culture in their work will need to be stiffer, tighter and more detailed than what has been offered hitherto.

If it is decided to define culture in statute or policy, then statutory guidance can refer explicitly to definitions in Welsh law or international treaties.

If a cultural rights approach is taken, guidance should include explicit reference to public bodies needing to consider the enjoyment of these rights and potential harms or risks to the enjoyment of these rights.

The exact form of any statutory guidance will depend on the legislative and policy approaches that are taken.



■ Civic involvement in decision making

Cultural democracy is a rich and complex area of practice, and a detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this report. It is sometimes used to describe grassroots participatory approaches to culture by arts organisations and funders.⁴⁷ But it also describes a model where citizens and residents are directly involved in making decisions about cultural policy.

An example of this is participatory budgeting. The Scottish Government aims for 1% of local authority budgets to be distributed by participatory budgeting.⁴⁸ There has also been some interest in this in Wales,⁴⁹ and some experimentation, for example in Gwent.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ <https://64millionartists.com/what-we-do/cultural-democracy/> ⁴⁸ <https://pbscotland.scot/blog/2023/7/14/what-is-the-1-local-government-participatory-budgeting-commitment> ⁴⁹ <https://wcpp.org.uk/publication/participatory-budgeting/> ⁵⁰ <https://sharedfuturecic.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/PB-Evaluation-Toolkit-Final-May-2023-web.pdf>

What are the options?

There are also non-budget-focused approaches to civic involvement. The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority has created a Citizens’ Assembly to shape its new culture plan, tasked with considering the question “What would culture and creativity look like in the West of England if they were for everyone?”⁵¹

■ Budgetary options

Financial decisions – and in particular tax-raising powers – are normally reserved to governments, because these are essentially political decisions which, in a very literal sense, are difficult to legislate for.

Making financial commitments in law is unusual but not unheard of. It was used for to cement the UK’s commitment to spending on international development⁵². Although it is ‘gestural’ – because legislation can always be repealed or amended – legislation is more difficult – costly, complicated, publicly visible, requiring a higher degree of consensus – to unpick than policy. And the gesture can be important, because such a firm and longer-term commitment can align other stakeholders – even potentially other funders or asset holders – to invest or commit other resources.

However, some of these commitments could be made politically as opposed to being made in law – meaning that these can be considered as both statutory and non-statutory options.

■ Minimum basic income

Minimum basic income for artists – there was some support for this in the consultation but also notes of caution. A pilot scheme in Ireland that ran from 2022 through 2025 will now be continued and potentially expanded from 2026.⁵³

■ Set a minimum percentage for culture in budgets

This could relate to a percentage of the total budget of the Welsh government or of specific public bodies, or a percentage of specific receipts. There are a number of models and precedents that range from large scale to small, across a range of sectors:

- UK Government commitment to spend 5% of budget on defence⁵⁴
- Liverpool City Region’s “1% for Culture” initiative commits to spending 1% of its devolution funding on cultural activities.⁵⁵
- Already mentioned, the Scottish Government’s target for 1% of local authority spending to be decided by participatory budgeting

⁵¹ <https://citizensforculture.info> ⁵² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/12/contents> ⁵³ <https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/unemployment-and-redundancy/employment-support-schemes/basic-income-arts/> <https://www.rte.ie/culture/2025/1007/1537249-budget-2026-basic-income-for-artists-scheme-to-become-permanent/> ⁵⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-to-deliver-on-5-nato-pledge-as-government-drives-greater-security-for-working-people> ⁵⁵ <https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/news/liverpool-city-region-introduces-1-for-culture-programme-to-support-cultural-activities>



“Implementation will be crucial to ensure the success of a Culture Bill.”

What are the options?

A “percent for culture” model (or similar) targeted at the budgets of public bodies in Wales would be particularly suited to supporting cross-sectoral working, ensuring that health and transport spend (for example) took culture into account.

However, this is not advisable in isolation: there needs to be clear guidance and principles that ensure this budget is allocated in a joined-up way and oriented towards the achievement of a coherent set of goals in order for it to achieve maximum impact.

■ Hypothecated taxes

Another approach is hypothecated taxes,⁵⁶ whose resulting net revenues are dedicated to culture. The Senedd has given Welsh local authorities the option to introduce a visitor levy from April 2027.⁵⁷ Revenue can be used, among other things, to promote Welsh language and culture.⁵⁸

Other models include the Edinburgh visitor levy, where 35% of funds raised are earmarked for culture, heritage and events.⁵⁹ As the English devolution process proceeds, England’s Local Government Association is advocating for more tax raising powers for councils in relation to tourism.⁶⁰

The BID (Business Improvement District) model gets around the fact that local authorities don’t have the authority in primary legislation to raise additional levies on businesses. It is used in some English BIDs to support tourism and culture.⁶¹

“If it is decided to define culture in statute or policy, then statutory guidance can refer explicitly to definitions in Welsh law or international treaties.”

⁵⁶ <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN01480/SN01480.pdf> ⁵⁷ <https://www.gov.wales/visitor-levy-small-contribution-lasting-legacy>
⁵⁸ <https://www.gov.wales/the-visitor-levy-how-we-can-all-benefit> ⁵⁹ <https://worldcitiescultureforum.com/city-project/edinburgh-visitor-levy/> ⁶⁰ <https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-submission-english-devolution-and-community-empowerment-bill> ⁶¹ <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-10158/CBP-10158.pdf>

What are the options?

■ Non-statutory options

As discussed previously, a Culture Bill is not the only way to move forward. Political decisions can be made around budgets – and to the extent that the “culture crisis” is considered to be a funding crisis, political decisions will need to be made in order to address it.

Putting legislative and budgetary options to one side, some of the options discussed here could still be taken forward by the Future Generations Commissioner. Non-statutory guidance around the implementation of the Well-being of Future Generations Act could, for example:

- Define culture in practice
- Recommend that public bodies take into account existing cultural rights
- Create a cultural rights charter to which organisations could sign up
- Recommend that public bodies pursue civic involvement in decision-making

To convene, promote, advise and publicise are also within the power of the Future Generations Commissioner – as they are also, to some extent, within the power of the cultural sector itself. However, it could be argued that these interventions have already been tried, hence making the case for statutory interventions.



Conclusion

This paper has taken a high-level look at options for action to ensure that culture is protected, promoted and prioritised by public bodies in Wales for the well-being of future generations. Given the short timeframe of the research, the ambition was not to reshape the whole of cultural policy for Wales, but to suggest directions for future travel.



The evidence is clear that the current approach to culture is not working. There are a range of potential interventions to improve cultural outcomes, many of which include both statutory and non-statutory options. However, it is equally clear that there is not one single silver bullet: there needs to be an integrated package of measures based on an overall framework (with the Spanish Cultural Rights Plan providing a useful model for this approach).

Although there are risks as well as opportunities to a Culture Bill, bringing forward new legislation as part of a package of measures could offer a strong demonstration of the importance and centrality of culture in Wales – and put it upon a firm footing for the long term.

This Green Paper represents the next step following the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales' call for a Culture Bill for Wales. Developed with The Audience Agency, it is designed to stimulate a discussion about the long-term future of culture in Wales. You are encouraged to [respond](#) to this Green Paper, and reflect on its content. We will collate your feedback and present it to the new Welsh Government, helping to inform the next phase of action.



Appendix 1: Research questions

What is the best way to ensure that culture is protected, promoted and prioritised by public bodies in Wales for the well-being of future generations?

This top-level research question was broken up into subsidiary research questions reflecting a process of:

- Laying some conceptual, policy and contextual groundwork
- Considering options for a Culture Bill
- Looking at the implications of such options.

Laying the groundwork

- What are the opportunities and challenges for culture in Wales?
- What are the most appropriate understandings of “culture” to be used within the Green Paper?
- What concepts of public cultural rights are most appropriate to be considered within the Green Paper?
- What public policy approaches have been taken to the main research question in other parts of the UK and other comparable countries and regions?

Options analysis

- What statutory and other public policy options (duties, powers etc) are available to protect, promote and prioritise culture for the well-being of future generations in Wales?
- What opportunities – and challenges, barriers, risks and harms – are associated with these options, including the status quo option?
- What might be the social, economic and environmental outcomes associated with the options considered?
- Which of these options would be the most effective and workable?

Working out the implications

- What might the role of different public bodies be (including requirements on them to collaborate)?
- What might the purpose and format of public funding be?
- Would new approaches to governance and delivery be required?

Appendix 2: Stakeholder consultation

Over a period of 6 weeks in October and November 2025, more than 250 people were consulted:

- 99 people responded to a call for written evidence. The call was disseminated at key events (Sŵn Connect, the Welsh Festival Forum, Wales Arts, Health and Wellbeing Network meetings, Charitable Trusts CEO meetings) and via partner mailing lists (including What Next? Cymru, Arts Council of Wales, Creu Cymru and The Audience Agency's own database of 400+ cultural organisations in Wales).
- Approximately 80 stakeholders attended the Future Generations Culture Forum and/or the October Charitable Trusts CEO Meeting. These included representatives of cultural, heritage, arts, sports and community organisations in Wales (including senior figures from Arts Council of Wales, Cadw, Amgueddfa Cymru, Creu Cymru and others), local authorities, 'umbrella' cultural and leisure sector bodies, representatives from wider sectors (transport, fire services and natural resources), artists and freelancers.
- Twenty members of the public attended two online focus groups. Participants represented a wide range of interests and demographics, including: rural and urban communities in Wales; young people; people who identified as actively engaged in culture, as well as those who didn't; a range of ethnicities and ages; first-language Welsh speakers, learners and non-Welsh speakers.
- One-to-one discussions with five key stakeholders in the Welsh cultural sector, as well as with the UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights, Dr Alexandra Xanthaki and the Director of Cultural Rights of the Spanish Ministry of Culture.
- A workshop with five members of the School of International Futures 'Pledge Network' – working across the United Nations system to bring future generations into international policymaking – to bring additional international perspectives
- A sense-making session was held to inform initial findings, with 23 stakeholders with experience of cultural leadership, policy-making and cross-sector working in local government.

Appendix 3: Potential roles of public bodies and formats of public funding

Statutory bases

In public law, statute and convention, public bodies can have:

- Duties which require them to do something
- Powers which enable them to do something, including regulations:
 - Requiring others to do something – eg use Welsh language (or another language) in certain contexts
 - Requiring others not to do something – eg not to demolish listed buildings without consent
- Funding to disburse or commit – which can in theory be ringfenced or predetermined but in practice parliaments⁶³ and the ministers they delegate to retain discretion over most aspects of public finance allocations⁶⁴

Duties can, for example, be:

- To provide a service – through a variety of delivery models which include delivering the service itself or ensuring that a service is provided through commissioning it
- To supervise, monitor and/or report – to an overseeing body (eg Welsh government) and/or to the public
- To consult – specific bodies (eg official consultees for planning), sector bodies, the public etc
- To convene a body or group – which can be given advisory (eg to a government minister) or stronger powers
- To issue guidance and standards – which supplement existing legislation and policy

In other words, there is more than one ‘maximum’ option. It isn’t necessarily to have a to duty to provide a service or ensure that rights are protected and enjoyed (see next section on rights).

The different roles of public bodies

Considering the different statutory bases for culture noted above, different bodies can have different roles with respect to a single duty, power or allocation of public resources.

For example:⁶⁵

- **Supervisory** – providing oversight, requiring reporting with some powers of sanction/intervention in case of failure or risk of failure⁶⁶
- **Advisory** – providing governance mechanisms to involve a mix of stakeholders and sectors beyond government and public bodies
- **Regulator/inspectorate** – where there is significant specialisation and risk – eg education, health, financial services etc
- **Public service delivery** – directly or through commissioning whilst remaining responsible for the delivery
- **Publicly owned corporation** – trading but publicly held for public benefit.

⁶² As in formulae for allocation of funding to local authorities or parts of the education system ⁶³ Both UK and Welsh parliaments relevant here ⁶⁴ Notable exceptions include the pensions ‘triple lock’ and commitments to energy feed-in tariffs. ⁶⁵ In part informed by <https://www.gov.wales/organisations> ⁶⁶ Per <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-libraries-as-a-statutory-service/libraries-as-a-statutory-service> in England and <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2025-04/public-libraries-supporting-sustainable-and-connected-communities-the-seventh-quality-framework-of-welsh-public-libraries-standards-2025-to-2028.pdf> in Wales noting <https://www.iwa.wales/agenda/2023/01/do-we-need-a-wales-libraries-act/>

Appendix 3: Potential roles of public bodies and formats of public funding

Public funding options

Public funding from various sources can be allocated to public bodies fulfilling different roles or instead be allocated to the cultural sector, civil society institutions or direct to individual members of the public etc.

The ‘various sources’ can be raised through general taxation or specific levies⁶⁷ – nationally, regionally or locally – and disbursed by government or public bodies, or others on their behalf.

In terms of ‘formats’, funding can be:

- deployed to provide resources within government or public bodies
- disbursed as grants to subsidise operations or part or fully finance capital spent or one-off costs⁶⁸
- used to commission services
- structured as loans (or other debt finance) or repayable grants⁶⁹
- used to provide guarantees or incentives which encourage the commitment of funding or other resources from others
- quasi commercial finance.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Otherwise known as hypothecated taxes such as tourist taxes, the BBC licence fee or local authority care precept. ⁶⁸ Often in the cultural sector to non-profits although as CRF and Innovate UK funding showed there with the appropriate policy justifications it can be made to for-profits as well ⁶⁹ Like some of the BFI which ‘recoups’ alongside other investors where projects or products are commercially successful ⁷⁰ Such as that provided by the British Business Bank or by fund managers such as Creative UK.

Appendix 4: Cultural rights and related duties

Cultural rights that subsist from Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights are:

1. The right to take part, or not, in the cultural life of their choice
2. To right to start, revise and cease their own cultural practices
3. The freedom to be creative and to the conditions necessary to exercise and develop their own creativity
4. The right to choose, express and develop cultural identities including the right to take part in, or not, particular collectives and to refer, or not, to specific cultural heritage – and to change those choices
5. The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion
6. The right to interact and exchange with others, regardless of group affiliations or frontiers
7. The right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas in all forms including written, spoken, art and media regardless of frontiers – in order to have freedom of expression
8. The right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association
9. The right to access and enjoy cultural resources such as the arts and cultural heritage, including that of others, together with knowledge including scientific knowledge
10. The rights of ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language
11. The right to shape and implement policies and decisions that affect the exercise of cultural rights

Obligations under 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions:

1. To create an environment which encourages individuals and social groups to create, produce, disseminate, distribute and have access to their own cultural expressions, being mindful of the circumstances and needs of minorities.
2. To create an environment which encourages individuals and groups to have access to diverse cultural expressions from within Wales, the UK and other countries.
3. To recognise the contribution of artists, others involved in the creative process, cultural communities and organisations that support their work.
4. To promote cultural diversity through educational and public awareness programmes, amongst other things.
5. To encourage creativity and strengthen production capacity through education, training and exchange programmes in the cultural industries.
6. To support the development, diffusion and conservation of culture
7. To support cooperation for sustainable development and poverty reduction capacity building in the public and private sector, SME development and technology transfer, particularly in the cultural industries and enterprises.
8. To integrate culture into all levels of policies supporting sustainable development in particular fostering the protection and promotion of cultural diversity.



Culture for Future Generations.
A Culture Act for Wales: Green Paper

Report commissioned by the Future
Generations Commissioner for Wales
and written by The Audience Agency.

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