

*Yn Gosod y Llwyfan I'r Celfyddydau Perfformio yng Nghymru
Setting the Stage for the Performing Arts in Wales*

Creu Cymru expresses its deep concern at the proposed 10% cut to the Arts Council of Wales announced by Welsh Government, and urgently calls for an end to the downward trend in public investment for culture in Wales.

The Creative Industries in Wales provides 80,000 jobs, (the music, performing and visual arts sector employs more than 7,000 people across Wales), and has an annual turnover of about £4 billion. They make a vital contribution to our health and well-being, national economy, and international reputation. The return on investment in the cultural sector, in terms of economic, social, and international benefits, far outweighs the current levels of expenditure.

It makes no economic sense to reduce investment in a sector which generates £1.40 additional spend for local economies for every £1 spent on a theatre ticket, adding up to £1.94bn per annum of extra value added to local economies by theatre audiences.

Compared with the start of the decade, Government funding of the Arts Council of Wales in 2020 was 21% lower than investment in 2009/10.

We urge Welsh Government to honour their commitment to culture and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and follow up their exemplary support of the sector in response to the impact of COVID-19.

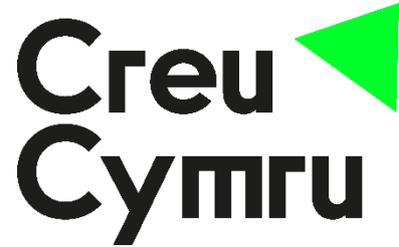
This is a particularly difficult moment for both freelancers (which can make-up up to 70% of our workforce), and for organisations: with ongoing recovery from the pandemic, cost of living, energy costs, long-term underfunding (including significant reduction from local authorities over the last decade), and the fallout from the Investment Review alongside a crumbling infrastructure: all contributing to a very challenging landscape.

Wales Millennium Centre are looking at reduced opening times and a cut in their non-commercial activity.

Michelle Perez, General Manager from Theatr Iolo said "A 10% cut would have a dramatic impact on Theatr Iolo, it would equate to one redundancy of a staff member from our already small core team of 5 people. Or it would mean at least one of our studio touring shows, would have to be cut each year. This reduction in our programme would mean reaching less and less children across the whole of Wales, with live theatre and cultural activities including the children who live in areas of significantly less investment or who are disadvantaged in some way.

David Wilson, Director of Aberystwyth Arts Centre said "Following a funding standstill outcome from the investment review we were already doing all we can to mitigate the impact of the resultant real terms cuts the news of this further cut is increasingly disheartening for Aberystwyth Arts Centre and for cultural life in mid-Wales. If we receive a reduction of (10%), it will take us back to the level of financial support we had in (2007)".

Geinor Styles, Artistic Director of Theatr na nÓg states:



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“Our original funding offer was already a cut in real terms, a 10% cut to our funding offer is a 40% cut in reality and will have a devastating impact to our work. Losing another c.£32K means we would need to cut our provision to young people, our Welsh language work or our main scale touring— As a small, producing company we don’t have the resources in-house to go after further funding; if we can’t find the money then the Board and Senior Management will have to make some difficult decisions as to how we continue.

In a country that values the arts and the contribution it makes for future generations, on its well-being and the Welsh language, further cuts will be detrimental to achieving its aims”.

There is already a recruitment freeze across many organisations. Across the sector we could see anything from 3-10% job losses from salaried staff and a knock-on effect to the freelance workforce.

The culture sector has been in a steady decline for over a decade due to the erosion caused by standstill funding. By taking decisive action on culture spend and investment in its budget for 2024-25, Welsh Government would ensure its long-term recovery, secure Wales’s place as a cultural world leader and unlock enormous benefits for Wales’s society and economy.

The Welsh Government has an annual budget of 21 billion. The Arts Council of Wales received £33.3 million in 2023/24, a 1.5% decrease from the previous year. Cultural spending as a proportion of the Welsh Government budget represents less than 0.15% of total overall expenditure – one of the lowest in Europe, where the average is 1.5% with some reaching 2.5%.

We encourage the Welsh Government to continue to collaborate with UK government in securing cultural tax reliefs, and to support the sector in making the case for their permanent extension.

We urge the Welsh Government to recognise the value and impacts of the culture sector, that it has a workforce that has been experiencing consistently low and fixed pay levels and a freelance workforce that is particularly precarious and vulnerable, and to work collaboratively to deliver solutions to secure its sustainable future such as a commitment to no further cuts and to work with the sector to find solutions that meet the needs of the sector whilst providing meaningful experiences and changing the lives of the people in Wales.

Cofion cynnes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Louise'.

Louise Miles-Payne, Cyfarwyddwr / Director, Creu Cymru