

Annwyl Delyth

I write to you, as Chair of the Culture Committee, in my role as Chair of Cyhoeddi Cymru (Publishing Wales) which was established in 2022 to be the voice of Welsh publishers.

Further background to the organisation can be found on our website:

www.cyhoeddi.cymru

There are two main reasons why we've made contact:

1. From 16-20 October 2024, 16 publishers will be representing Wales at the Frankfurt Book Fair – the world's biggest and most prestigious publishing trade fair – where we will be endeavouring to sell the literary rights of our books (Welsh and English language) to publishers around the world. Our presence at the fair has been supported by Welsh Government and we are very grateful for that funding. In addition to Frankfurt, the Welsh Government provides the financial support that enables Cyhoeddi Cymru to have a presence at the London Book Fair each Spring at Olympia. We sincerely appreciate the financial support for these two fairs and have suggestions as to how our presence could be further improved in future years. Moreover, we'd also wish to stress the importance of a Wales stand at the Bologna Book Fair - the world's most important event for children's publishers - where we currently do not have a national presence. We would relish the opportunity to brief the Culture Committee on our activities at international book fairs and how we promote our nation to a global audience. The briefing would also include our home-grown successes such as *The Blue Book of Nebo* by Manon Steffan Ros (originally published in Welsh as *Llyfr Glas Nebo*) which has been translated into several languages and won the prestigious Carnegie Prize for children's literature in 2023.
2. While funding for the business-to-business book fairs is good news we also have some bad news. Many Welsh publishers receive specific grant funding which enable them to publish new books (for adults and children) in both languages but that budget, which had been provided on a standstill basis for well over 10 years, was reduced for the 2023-24 financial year by approximately 8% and then cut again for the present financial year (2024-25) by a further 10%. Our understanding is that another significant cut is being discussed for 2025-26. Three consecutive cuts on the back of a decade or more of standstill budgets will be catastrophic for many of Wales's publishers. It would signal nothing less than an existential crisis for the Welsh publishing industry. The funding cuts have already had an impact on publisher's staffing levels and this will worsen further if additional cuts are introduced. It is not inconceivable that publishers may cease trading altogether. Fewer staff working fewer hours in fewer publishing houses will result in fewer books for

our nation, and fewer books from Wales for Wales will undoubtedly be detrimental to literacy levels in Wales, in both languages. As the OECD has stated: 'Reading for pleasure is the single biggest indicator of a child's future success – more than their family circumstances, their parents' educational background or their income'.

We are frustrated that funding is being provided by one part of Government yet is being removed by another – it's not the best example of a holistic strategy of support for Wales's oldest creative industry – and we have real fears for the future of publishing in Wales.

Cyhoeddi Cymru would be very grateful for the opportunity to provide evidence to the Culture Committee and to share our plan to secure the future of the Welsh publishing industry. Our leading authors would also welcome the chance to participate in those discussions.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yn gywir iawn

Mr Ashley Drake

Cadeirydd Dros Dro / Acting Chair

Cyhoeddi Cymru / Publishing Wales

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