

CWLSIR Committee: 13.11.24,

Actions & Questions Not Reached

- **An update on the implementation of the recommendations from the 2015 Expert Review of Local Museum Provision**

The Expert Review is now almost 10 years old. The Welsh Government's support of the local museums sector reflects the current financial and social environment in which both Government and museums now work rather than solely seeking to implement the Review's recommendations. As we progress to the implementation phase of the new Priorities for Culture, there is an opportunity to consider the best options for ongoing support for local museums.

Viability of the *Creation of three Regional Bodies* recommendation depended on the support of Local Authority Members and Chief Executives across Wales and in 2015 was not deemed a priority for senior officials nor elected members. Estimations of funding required to set up and then run regional bodies indicate significant cost implications for the Welsh Government and Local Authorities. At the current time, recognising the immense financial pressures faced by the public sector, it has not been possible to progress this recommendation.

Other actions have, and continue to be, undertaken to address some of the ten recommendations of the Review. For example, the Museums Branch of Welsh Government works strategically with partners such as the Federation of Museums and Art Galleries of Wales, key sector support bodies such as Association of Independent Museums, Kids in Museums and Group for Education in Museums, as well as Amgueddfa Cymru, to provide leadership, focus resource effectively and co-ordinate activities across the local sector. In 2022-23, officials commissioned a review of our management of the Museum Accreditation Scheme in Wales and used its recommendations to ensure our support of the sector is focussed and appropriate. This has included new and additional support for our mentor scheme for museums without a professionally trained member of staff.

We have developed a new significance toolkit for museums to support organisations to identify and articulate the significance of their collections and how these contribute to the story of Wales - [Collections significance assessment: toolkit for Welsh museums | GOV.WALES](#). We have piloted the toolkit with museums, offered training in its use and have funded the Sporting Heritage subject specialist network to use the toolkit with museums this year. We are also working to explore the establishment of a Welsh scheme to recognise nationally significant items in local collections. This work will enable both Government and the sector to make informed decisions around rationalisation, development and the safeguarding of Wales' collections of significance.

The Welsh Government continues to deliver an annual high quality workforce development programme for local museums, libraries and archives. This includes access to specialist training, support and advice, toolkits and guides, and cross-sectoral networks. Following the Expert Review, the Community Learning Libraries

Capital fund was extended to include museums and archives. To date over £3m has been allocated to local museums to undertake capital improvements. In addition, this year we also allocated over £340,000 to local museums for improvements to their collections stores.

- **How much funding provided by the Welsh Government to its culture and sport arm's-length bodies in this and the previous financial year been used to fund redundancies? How many people are employed in culture and sport arm's-length bodies and local museums now, and how many were employed in 2010?**

Last autumn, we began conversations with the culture and sport Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) to encourage them to start scenario planning for a potentially challenging 2024-25 Budget. Following the draft Budget announcement on 19 December 2023, the ALBs had to make difficult decisions about how to deploy their workforces, to make sure they could operate within their revised budgets and continue to serve the people of Wales.

After exploring their options, and following discussions with their trade unions, some ALBs decided to launch redundancy consultations. We agreed to pay the full costs of these redundancies in the financial year 2023-24, to help mitigate against the reductions to revenue budgets in the following financial year (2024-25). Amgueddfa Cymru had forecast a budget deficit of £1.5m before the reduction to its revenue budget was announced, so its redundancy scheme was part of efforts to make sufficient savings to address both issues. The additional funding we provided to each ALB in the financial year 2023-24 was:

- Amgueddfa Cymru (£5,161,623)
- National Library of Wales (£1,143,500)
- Arts Council of Wales (£837,616)
- Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (£500,408.65).
- Sport Wales (£0)

No funding has been provided in the financial year 2024-25 to support redundancy costs.

The following table contains the number of people currently employed by the ALBs, compared with the end of 2010. For Amgueddfa Cymru and the Arts Council of Wales the figures provided are headcount. For the National Library of Wales and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales and Sports Wales the figures provided are Full-Time Equivalent (FTE). We have provided the figures for permanent staff with project and/or casual staff in brackets.

People employed by the ALBs

ALB	Current	2010
Amgueddfa Cymru	593 (& 206)	631 (&147) ¹
National Library	178 (& 25)	282.3 (& 7.3)
Arts Council of Wales	88	94
Royal Commission	22.2 (& 7)	32.5 (& 12)
Sport Wales	145.85	143.45

- **What consideration has the Welsh Government given to the proposal from Swim Wales to enable universal school swimming?**

Learning to swim is an important life skill and a foundation skill for a lifetime enjoyment of water-based activities. The two main opportunities for children in Wales to learn to swim are lessons provided in school or lessons in the community (local authorities, leisure trusts, independent swim schools) that are paid for. These opportunities are available to participants at a variable cost across Wales.

Over many years, Swim Wales has developed strong links with providers across Wales that deliver school swimming. However, the NGB does not currently have any direct relationships or influence with individual schools on a local basis.

I am aware there has been a decline in the number of young people who are able to swim by the time they leave primary school. Issues relating to the delivery of Curriculum for Wales are a matter for my colleague, the Cabinet Secretary for Education, but I am keen to explore opportunities across government to see if more can be done.

Through the Sport budget, the Welsh Government continues to provide funding, through Sport Wales, for local authorities to offer free swimming to children and young people aged 16 and under. The scheme provides a free splash session every weekend in every pool and two additional sessions in the summer holidays. Local authorities provide targeted support to encourage young people from areas of deprivation to participate in the scheme.

- **Details of the process the Welsh Government has required Amgueddfa Cymru to complete to access £1.3 million of capital funding that was announced in July 2024. How does this process compare to other awards of funding from the Welsh Government to arm's-length bodies? What barriers would there be to streamlining this process given the urgency of capital work on the Amgueddfa Cymru estate?**

The £1.3m announced in July 2024 represents the first-year emergency work of what is a proposed, longer-term capital investment in National Museum Cardiff. The total estimated investment required for this is £30m. As such, it represents a large-scale investment and, as a major project, requires development in line with the Five Case

¹ Figures are for 2013

Model methodology (aka Better Business Cases). This approach is mandated in the HM Treasury Green Book, which all public bodies are required to follow when spending public money on its projects and programmes. In this case, the first year of the project (the £1.3m identified) has been dealt with through the simplest and lowest level of business case, known as a Business Justification Case (BJC), due to the nature of the emergency work needed and timing of the funding to be released.

The Better Business Cases standard means spending proposals are scoped and planned to support evidence-based decision-making. In line with requirements of the Better Business Case model and aligned to the funding level being requested, we separated the first-year emergency work valued at £1.3m into a single stage BJC. This allows the urgent work to proceed in the financial year 2024 to 2025 and to make access to the funding easier and less bureaucratic in-year. However, this was on the condition that a Full Business Case is iteratively developed through its three stages to support decision making with regard to the remaining investment of £28.7m, sought over a 5-year period from 2026-27 onward. Guidance on the process for projects is available at [Better business cases: investment decision-making framework | GOV.WALES](#).

For specific capital investment, infrastructure projects and programmes, both the Welsh and the UK Governments follow the best practice Better Business Case model. Use of the methodology enables users to provide clarity in respect of the objectives of investment and appraisal of the available options that meet said objectives, to ensure that the preferred option is the one that optimises costs, benefits and risks, ensuring that we deliver the best possible outcomes against a backdrop of constrained public finances. That is why our infrastructure investments are subject to established business assurance practices, dictated by the level of investment being sought and the inherent level of risk.

In line with the process, Amgueddfa Cymru produced a Risk Potential Assessment (RPA) so the level and type of risk associated with the project could be assessed and an appropriate mechanism agreed for the first and future years of the project. Following the submission of the RPA the Welsh Government's Integrated Assurance Hub (IAH) agreed the approach to be taken for this project, based on the assessment of risk. This follows one of the three approaches described below:

1. Single Stage Business Justification Case - Low Value/Risk Project (£0 to £250k whole life costs).
2. Single Stage Business Justification Case - Medium Value/Risk Project (£250k to £2 million whole life costs)
3. Three Stage Business Case (SOC, OBC, FBC) – High Value/Risk Project (Over £2 million whole life costs)

As the first year was specifically for emergency work to protect the national collection at a value of £1.3m, and based on the assessment of the RPA, the Medium Value – Business Justification Case was used:

www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-10/business-justification-case-medium-value-1.odt.

This template was provided to Amgueddfa Cymru on 29 May for completion, ahead of the formal announcement of funding in July. Once completed to a satisfactory standard, an award letter would then be issued to enable the work to commence. In this case, two drafts have been submitted by Amgueddfa Cymru and we have been working with them to strengthen the content of the BJC.

The Five Case Model methodology (Better Business Cases) systematically addresses a number of key questions that lie at the heart of an investment decision. It is the recognised best practice approach for the preparation of spending proposals in the UK public sector, as directed by HM Treasury's Green Book and requires projects to be planned and to operate within an agreed framework to ensure their success and was developed in response to failures in the delivery of public sector projects.

The process being followed is no different to the requirements of other large scale cultural capital investment projects with funding being allocated to either local authorities or ALBs such as Celf, Theatr Clwyd and the Football Museum for Wales. Amgueddfa Cymru has been asked to follow this guidance to develop its project plans and access funding for both the redevelopment of the National Slate Museum and the work at National Museum Cardiff.

The Better Business Cases model was developed to strengthen project planning and delivery in view of the failings of previous public sector approaches. We, as co-owner of the standard along with HMT, have adopted this best practice approach to ensure that projects deliver the outputs, outcomes and benefits intended from the allocation of funding.

Information requested by the Committee on questions not reached:

- **What is the Welsh Government's current plan for ongoing revenue funding for the National Contemporary Art Gallery project? How reasonable is it for the Welsh Government to outsource the revenue funding of its own project rather than using its own resources?**

Discussions are continuing with the project partners on the funding required and potential sources, to support both the transition from completion of the capital investment to delivery, and the future operating/running costs of the operating model. These discussions reflect the need for the partners to take on delivery of a new initiative, having recently absorbed reductions to grant in aid baselines.

We believe it is reasonable expectation for the initiative to become self-sustaining over time, through a multifaceted funding model taken forward by the delivery partners. Funding for next year will be a discussed as part of the draft Budget for 2025-26, published on 10 December.

- **What ongoing costs will there be to partner organisations (the Arts Council, National Library and Amgueddfa Cymru) as part of the National Contemporary Art Gallery project? Will the Welsh Government cover these costs?**

My Officials have met and discussed expectations going forward with the three project partners. Updated papers setting out the case and estimating costs, commencing from April 2025, were received ahead of the Celf Project Board held during in November. These are by no means final at this at stage. Following the discussion at Project Board, officials have provided further feedback to aid the development of the model and cost structure. We have been clear that the future delivery model will seek to reduce reliance on funding from the Welsh Government over time. To do this, it will be important for the partners to access and secure external funding in addition to prioritising the funding available to the three partners. Further updates can be provided as discussions progress and options move towards being finalised and when budget allocations are clearer.

- **What assessment has the Welsh Government made of the state of culture and sport facilities in Wales? How has this changed in the last ten years?**

Leisure Services

The Welsh Government is working with the Chief Leisure Officers Wales (CLOW) group to determine the level and type of provision and condition of facilities in each local authority and have recently concluded a survey on this which is currently being reviewed and we will be in a position to report our findings shortly.

Sport Wales, as part of its capital programme, have set up two collaborative groups; one on pitches with football rugby and hockey, and one on courts, with tennis, netball and basketball; and they assess the need for investment in those facilities based on the existing provision and need across Wales.

Culture

Our Transformation Capital Grant programme provides funding for local museums, libraries and archives. In 2022 we commissioned an evaluation of the programme including some reflections on the future capital needs of our local sectors. Building on this we recently appointed contractors to provide independent analyses of the local museum sector's capital investment needs. This will provide independent evidence of the nature and scale of infrastructure issues faced by the local sector.

In 2023-24 the Welsh Government commissioned a review of collections management by local authority and independent museums in Wales and our national arm's length cultural organisations. This showed that for museums situated in historic buildings it can be extremely difficult and costly to maintain the environmental standards required to care for collections, some of which could be at risk. In response the Welsh Government launched a grant scheme to improve storage facilities. Eight awards have recently been made

The latest Museum Spotlight Survey (2022) asked museums to self-assess the performance and provision of their buildings. This also provided useful data which is informing our thinking on how our interventions can be targeted to be as effective as possible.

Arts

The Arts Council of Wales (ACW) commissioned a review into its 'Capital Funding 2010-2023' for internal purposes. The research, led by *Think Philanthropy*, identified challenges in the current state of arts facilities in Wales, including decreased capital funding impacting on arts infrastructure. The research identified a series of recommendations that ACW are now considering in its approach to distributing capital funding to best support arts facilities in Wales.

The Welsh Government's *Invest in Theatres* programme via ACW has provided vital investment to 26 theatres and venues across Wales over two years.

- **How much funding for culture and sport comes from other portfolios in the Welsh Government (e.g. education and health)? Does the Minister intend to increase this figure?**

Culture is mainstreamed into a number of Welsh Government policy areas. Therefore, it is not possible to provide an overall figure, but I acknowledge the importance of sectors within my portfolio receiving funding from other parts of Welsh Government and I am aware of some positive examples.

For example, the Creative Learning through the Arts programme is focused on supporting learners' creativity, as well as on developing their experiences in the arts. Welsh Government funding for the programme from the Education department, under the current grant award (2022 - 2025) is £3m, i.e. £1m per annum, and this is match-funded by the Arts Council of Wales through National Lottery funding.

Because of its cross-cutting benefits, the sector also receives funding from other Welsh Government departments. For example, during this financial year Sport Wales receive £600,000 from the Health Department to support Health Weight: Healthy Wales.

Third Sector Sports and Culture organisations can also receive support through the Volunteering Wales Grants, Strategic Volunteering Wales Grant and Community Asset Loan Fund all of which are managed by WCVA on our behalf.

The Welsh Language of course is an integral part of our culture and initiatives that promote culture within the Welsh language portfolio include:

- £2.4m for the Urdd (figure includes the £0.2m for their national youth theatre)
- £1m for the National Eisteddfod
- £0.72m for the promotion of Welsh music and Dydd Miwsig Cymru (*Welsh Language Music Day*)
- Funding to the *Mentrau Iaith* that promote Welsh culture, including organising local Welsh-medium festivals and events.

Local authorities are a major investor in the places and people that encourage and facilitate participation in culture and sport.

The Sustainable Communities for Learning and the Community Facilities programmes also support the drive to create modern and accessible facilities for culture and sport.

- **How have expectations asked of Welsh Government funded-organisations in their remit letters changed whilst their real-terms funding has decreased?**

Earlier this year, there was a discussion with ALBs on the impact of funding reductions in relation to respective remit letters. In these discussions, we acknowledged the challenges being faced by these organisations and, subsequently, that more realistic objectives need to be set in relation to how they deliver against their Remit Letters going forward.

Each organisation was asked to prepare or review its operational plan for 2024 to 2025, demonstrating how it will deliver against the areas outlined in the Remit Letter. In doing so, they were asked to consider the good progress already made during this term of government as well as their budget for 2024 to 2025.

I have approved the Arts Council of Wales' operational plan for 2024 to 2025. Amgueddfa Cymru, the National Library of Wales and the Royal Commission have all shared draft documentation with my officials which forms the basis for ongoing discussions between the Welsh Government and the organisations. Officials are also ensuring that the context in which the organisations are now working is taken into account during quarterly monitoring meetings.

- **What consideration has the Welsh Government given to funding national arts companies directly, rather than through the Arts Council?**

The Welsh Government has no plans to fund national arts companies directly. The Welsh Government considers that the Arts Council of Wales is best placed to distribute Welsh Government funding for the arts across Wales, working under the strategic framework we set.

- **What work had the Welsh Government done developing its proposal for a “Museum of North Wales” and what is the current status of this proposal after the previous Cabinet Secretary announced in July 2024 that “investing in [...] a Museum for North Wales will not be possible at this time”?**

Amgueddfa Cymru was originally charged with developing plans for the Museum of North Wales within its remit letter. Following the submission of the draft Strategic Outline Case (SOC) and subsequent detailed discussions between Amgueddfa Cymru and officials, in May 2023 the then Minister for Economy, Vaughan Gething MS, agreed to pause and restart the project with the Welsh Government leading. This helped avoid confusion between the capital investment required for redeveloping the National Slate Museum in the short term and the investment

potentially required in the longer term specifically for a separate Museum of North Wales.

Informal consultation with the local museum sector had taken place, with a formal consultation workshop being planned for early 2024. However, a decision was made to pause any public workshops to discuss a new museum following the concerns regarding the intense financial pressures on all cultural institutions, at a national and local level.

It was within this context that the Welsh Government published its Written Statement on 10 July 2024, detailing the decision that the Museum of North Wales would no longer be actively progressed, in order to focus available funding on the immediate priorities of protecting and preserving existing cultural institutions and their collections.

It should be noted however that the Welsh Government is fully committed to bringing parts of the national collection that relate to North Wales back to the area. The redevelopment of the National Slate Museum aims to provide major improvements for access to and use of the national collections and to enable more people to learn, share skills and celebrate creativity through the creation of new spaces at the Llanberis site.