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Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a'r Seilwaith
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref

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Dear Bethan

For information, I have attached a copy of the press release and executive summary from the final report by Dr Simon Thurley, which will be published today. I asked Dr Thurley to look at the success, resilience and sustainability of Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales.

Yours sincerely

Ken Skates AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a'r Seilwaith
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Review of Amgueddfa Cymru

Executive Summary

by Dr Simon Thurley CBE for the Welsh Government

June 2017

Executive Summary

- 1.1** Amgueddfa Cymru is one of the great museums of the UK. In its collections, the expertise and knowledge of its staff, its support of social and community development and its contribution to a knowledge of Welsh history and culture its achievements have been outstanding. For a century the National Museum was almost a proxy for the National Assembly championing the cause of Wales, its history and traditions. Since 1999 it has taken its place in the stable of iconic National organisations funded by the Welsh Government.
- 1.2** The Welsh Government, under successive ministers, has recognised the importance of the museum and of culture in its widest sense to Wales. The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 placed culture at the heart of decision-making about the future of the nation. Most recently in its culture statement 'Light springs through the Dark' the Government has reiterated the benefits that Wales gets from both public and private investment in culture. Museums are seen to play an important role in this. Wales was the first country in the UK to publish a museums strategy in 2010 and two years ago a review was undertaken into local museum provision. More recently a series of reviews have examined the possibilities of the Welsh Government's own funded cultural bodies working more closely together. My review of Amgueddfa Cymru should be seen in this context.
- 1.3** These are testing times for the public sector. Austerity, and now the uncertainty caused by the vote to leave the EU, are financially and strategically challenging. Feelings run high and tensions have arisen. Politicians are forced to make decisions they perhaps would prefer not to make. Directly funded, arms-length bodies, such as Amgueddfa Cymru, have had to respond to changes outside their control and sometimes outside their comfort zone.
- 1.4** At times such as these it is vital that funders and funded work closely together to well defined and publically articulated objectives. It is important that there is an appropriate division between policy and delivery; clarity over the technical framework within which objectives are delivered; assurance that the capability to deliver is sound; that a robust, but not suffocating, performance management system is in place; that feedback from users and employees is transparent and actioned appropriately.
- 1.5** These are some of the foundations upon which Amgueddfa Cymru needs to build its future.
- 1.6** This review has found a successful and thriving organisation of which Wales should be proud. I have been consistently impressed by the passion and commitment of staff and by the quality of the museums. Taking the role of visitor, over the last few months, I have been informed, inspired and amazed by great displays and wonderful objects. It has transformed my understanding of Wales and Welsh culture.

1.7 But this has not just been a pleasurable tour of fascinating museums. I have had a hard-edged remit to look critically at aspects of Amgueddfa Cymru's business. In this I have a small number of high level observations and a larger number of lower-level recommendations.

1. Amgueddfa Cymru should consider being more ambitious in its interpretation and tell a story that is not narrowly Welsh but more about Wales's part in the global industrial revolution.
2. The National Museum Cardiff should work much more closely with Visit Wales, Cardiff City Council and the Welsh Government to position itself as a key part of the offer for tourists to Cardiff City Region.
3. Amgueddfa Cymru prioritises support to the manager of the Slate Museum and sets its sights on a more ambitious role for the museum in the tourism of Snowdonia expanding operations rather than reducing them and entering into partnerships with public and private sector bodies to achieve this.
4. The Welsh Government should rationalise the fragmented management of its outstanding sites at Caerleon under the management of Amgueddfa Cymru and encourage a wider local partnership to develop the town as a tourist honeypot in conjunction with the Heritage Lottery Fund.
5. The Welsh Government and Amgueddfa Cymru seek to acknowledge and understand the causes of current frustrations on both sides.
6. Then that the Welsh Government and Amgueddfa Cymru develop a shared 10 year vision for Amgueddfa Cymru with a five year focus and three year funding agreement.
7. That the museum takes steps, including those recommended in this report, to give the Welsh Government confidence in its capability to deliver the strategy.
8. That the Welsh Government takes steps to create a policy and governance environment that will enable the Amgueddfa Cymru to deliver the new strategy.
9. I recommend that, taking account of the recommendations in this review and the views of the Welsh Government the Director-General, with the Museum President and Trustees, reviews the skills necessary on the senior management team in order to strengthen its capability to meet the challenges it faces in the next few years.
10. That the President and the Board with the Welsh Government urgently invest in supporting the senior management team in a programme of rebuilding trust with the staff and unions.
11. The Welsh Government considers moving to an ends based policy for access to Amgueddfa Cymru rather than a means based policy. This would allow the museum to keep its eye on the desired access policy while itself determining the balance between charged and free services and the appropriate levels of charge.
12. I recommend that Amgueddfa Cymru in future charges for special exhibitions, establishes an appropriate CRM system and a membership scheme as soon as possible.
13. Amgueddfa Cymru agrees with the Welsh Government the parameters available for its commercial development including policies on charging, opening hours and the terms and conditions of commercial staff.

14. Assuming the Welsh Government agree flexible commercial freedoms for Amgueddfa Cymru, the museum appoint at Executive Board level a commercial director at a salary that will attract a person of high calibre and wide experience of visitor attractions.
15. The new commercial director introduce appropriate charging regimes, Customer Relationship Management systems, membership schemes and management improvements in catering and retail to expedite and develop the museum's commercial offer.
16. Amgueddfa Cymru reviews its donations strategy, improves the physical infrastructure of donation boxes, and investigates ways of making an appropriate face-to-face ask at each of its sites.
17. That the Welsh Government find a way of providing some transitional funding for Amgueddfa Cymru as part of a jointly owned package to build a resilient business model for the future.

Thurley Review of Amgueddfa Cymru

Today, the Welsh Government will publish recommendations made by Dr Simon Thurley in a review commissioned by the Cabinet Secretary for the Economy and Infrastructure, Ken Skates, to look at the success, resilience and sustainability of Amgueddfa Cymru.

Dr Thurley makes a number of useful observations and recommendations which both the Cabinet Secretary and Welsh Government, and Amgueddfa Cymru will now consider in detail.

Cabinet Secretary, Ken Skates, said: “I’d like to thank Dr Thurley for his balanced, thoughtful and impartial report. The review is a key step to help the Welsh Government identify the most appropriate ways in which we can help ensure Amgueddfa Cymru continues to thrive in the future, in what continue to be challenging financial times.

“As outlined in the report on Historic Wales, I remain absolutely committed to enabling our heritage institutions to maximise the economic benefits that they bring to the people of Wales

“We will now work closely with Amgueddfa Cymru’s Board of Trustees and Senior Management Team to determine how best to take the review and recommendations forward.”

In his review, Dr Thurley recognises the quality of Amgueddfa Cymru’s national collections, the expertise and knowledge of staff, its support of social and community development and its contribution to a knowledge of Welsh history and culture, and describes its achievements in these areas as having been outstanding. His recommendations also look at relations between Amgueddfa Cymru and Welsh Government; opportunities for commercial development as well as policy and governance, and future vision.

Dr Thurley, said: "I hope that my review and its recommendations will form a strong foundation for the museum, together with the Welsh Government, to meet the challenges and successfully move forward to the next stage in its history."

David Anderson, Director General of Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales said: "We are pleased that the positive contribution made by Amgueddfa Cymru – through its staff, museums and collections – is acknowledged by Dr Thurley in his review.

"He describes Amgueddfa Cymru as one of the 'great museums of the UK and a 'successful and thriving organisation', of which we are extremely proud.

"We recognise the need to make improvements in certain areas of our work including income generation and industrial relations, and Dr Thurley's observations and recommendations provide a helpful framework to help us address these.

Elisabeth Elias, President of Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales said:

"I would like to thank the Cabinet Secretary for commissioning this Review, which has captured both the successes of this much-loved and iconic national institution as well as some of the challenges it faces.

"As a Board of Trustees we will be considering the recommendations in detail and supporting the Senior Management Team going forward in working with staff, the recognised Trade Unions and Government Officials in their implementation."

Executive Summary and Recommendations:

<http://gov.wales/topics/culture-tourism-sport/museums-archives-libraries/national-museum/?lang=en>