



**Federation of Museums
and Art Galleries of Wales**

**Ffederasiwn Amgueddfeydd
ac Oriolau Celf Cymru**

The Federation of Museums and Art Galleries of Wales is the independent strategic body for museums and art galleries in Wales. We advocate for the highest standards of museum provision throughout Wales.

Response to the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee consultation on how publicly funded bodies can use culture to tackle poverty and social exclusion in Wales.

- **How effective has the Welsh Government been in improving participation in and access to culture for people in poverty?**

The Federation of Museums and Art Galleries of Wales believes that Welsh Government, through its Museums Archives Libraries Division (MALD), has been effective in improving access to heritage and culture through its Fusion programme, especially for those from socio-economically deprived areas of the country. MALD has encouraged all museums – local authority, independent and national - to participate in the Fusion programme. We feel this is particularly important – that Fusion has encompassed and recognized the work all museums, not only the nationally sponsored institutions, undertake at local level.

Through providing grants, for Fusion itself and through the funding it gives to the Federation for our Accreditation Support Grants scheme, many museums (national and local) across the country have engaged with communities in economically deprived areas in Wales. While the level of funding available has not been overly significant, coming specifically from the MALD budgets, the reach and value of the work undertaken has been significant. We feel much more could be done with additional funding, and there is an opportunity via the Future Generations Act to look to other divisions within Welsh Government (eg. education, communities for work) to contribute small amounts to create further funding for the programme – to sustain the excellent work currently being undertaken, but also to extend it. Funding for the programme and the employment of the network of coordinators is crucial for the majority of our membership to be able to take part in the programme.

Examples of some of the work undertaken within Fusion programmes can be found in a new report *Welsh museums and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act*

<http://happymuseumproject.org/report-welsh-museums-and-the-wellbeing-of-future-generations-act/>

This report showcases how six local Welsh museums are responding to the Future Generations Act, often specifically working with communities living in poverty. The project that resulted in this report was also funded by Welsh Government via MALD's funding of the Federation's Accreditation Support Grant scheme.

- **How effective have the efforts of Welsh Government sponsored bodies (namely the Arts Council, National Museum, National Library and the**

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales) and local government been in using culture to tackle poverty?

While Welsh Government's sponsored bodies have embraced the Fusion programme and developed ways and projects to improve access to culture for all communities, we feel Amgueddfa Cymru National Museum Wales in particular is an exemplar in this area. Free access to the National Museum sites and the National Library is key, but both also work in partnership with local museums to bring national collections into communities. For example, the *Sharing Treasures project*, (a partnership between National Museum and the Federation, supported with HLF grant funding) has worked with local museums in Swansea, Wrexham, Welshpool, Pembrokeshire and Gwynedd on projects targeted at key communities. The Royal Commission has developed programmes of exhibitions and talks that take its collections and expertise into communities through partnerships with museums, archives and libraries and community organisations. Its current First World War U Boat project has engaged coastal communities across Wales from Holyhead to Cardiff through local museums.

In October 2018 a conference in St. Fagans celebrated the impact of heritage and culture on young people's lives. The Rt Hon the Lord Elis-Thomas AM, Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport, welcomed participants. On the platform young people highlighted the powerful impact that actively designing and participating in cultural and heritage events, exhibitions, and projects can have. The event was co-curated and delivered by young people, working with cultural bodies including Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum Wales, Arts Council Wales, Cadw, Literature Wales and Federation members.

- **What impact has the Welsh Government's Fusion programme had on using culture to tackle poverty?**

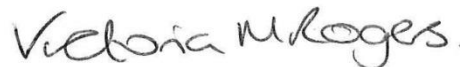
MALD, as part of the Fusion programme, has undertaken research to evidence the impact of the programme on participants. We welcome that this not only looks at quantitative, but crucially qualitative evidence. We feel that the Fusion programme has done much to raise the profile with partners, of the role that culture can play in tackling poverty, but there is still much to do within Welsh Government itself to ensure that other divisions and departments value the impacts that culture, heritage and arts can play in helping deliver their objectives.

We would argue that the indicators currently used for the programme, while meshing with those from the reporting undertaken for Communities First initiative, may not be completely fit for purpose. It is clear that culture, heritage and arts can make significant impacts on the indicators chosen, but the evidence called for may not be as clearly achievable in certain cases (eg. Volunteering as a route to work – volunteering with cultural organisations does indeed lead to jobs, but it more often than not takes longer than the two years that the Fusion programme has) or are too specific (eg. “the client has participated in an activity at least twice a week for 4 weeks with the primary purpose of helping them to feel more positive about their mental well being”). We would advocate that the programme is charged with creating its own indicators to evidence success that may be more meaningful going forward.

We feel there is more work to be done to ensure that the value of the work local museums undertake to meet the Future Generations Act and the work they do as part of the Fusion programme is recognised by local authorities. Often this work is overshadowed by local authorities focusing on nationally funded institutions and overlooking the work they themselves are doing via their own museums.

- **How effective have the Fusion pioneer programmes been in stimulating local collaboration?**

The Fusion programme has given an opportunity and a focus for our members to be more involved in a national initiative. This has enabled museums across Wales to be recognised equally as deliverers of activities for those living in poverty, that have a direct impact on their health and wellbeing, employment opportunities, learning, and that help to widen horizons and ambition. The Fusion programme has very successfully created networks of local providers – cultural and community – and has been a catalyst to ensure these networks continue and expand following the loss of the Community First clusters. Many of our members have forged new relationships and partnerships with other cultural organisations, but crucially with those working directly in communities (eg. Housing associations, communities for work, Flying Start groups, etc.). Key to this has been the role of the Fusion coordinators.



Victoria Rogers

President, Federation of Museums and Art Galleries of Wales

Federation of Museums & Art Galleries of Wales:

Museums empower people through learning, participation and inspiration

Mae amgueddfeydd yn grymuso pobl trwy addysg, cyfranogiad ac ysbrydoliaeth

Museums and their collections strengthen community identity

Mae amgueddfeydd a'u casgliadau yn cryfhau hunaniaeth gymunedol

Museums make a significant economic contribution through tourism and regeneration

Mae amgueddfeydd yn cyfrannu'n sylweddol at yr economi trwy dwristiaeth ac adfywio