

Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas AM
Deputy Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport
Welsh Government

2 April 2019

Dear Dafydd,

National Librarian for Wales recruitment exercise

The National Library is one of the Welsh Government Sponsored Public Bodies which fall under the remit of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee. As part of our role in scrutinising the Library's performance, I am obviously keen to ensure its leadership team is able to provide the vision and responsiveness required in today's challenging times for the public sector, and heritage organisations in particular.

The recent recruitment exercise for a successor to Linda Tomos, the National Librarian for Wales has raised some concerning issues which I would like to examine.

I have seen the email exchanges between the Human Resources Department in the Library and officials in the Welsh Government's Museums, Archives and Libraries Division. These emails were released to Cymdeithas yr Iaith under the Freedom of Information Act.

The content of the emails seem to suggest that you, as Deputy Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport, sought, through your officials, to determine the wording of the job advertisement before it was published, by insisting that the job criteria should specify Welsh language speaking skills were 'highly desirable' rather than 'essential'. I am of the view, as was the President of the Library, that your intervention went beyond the boundaries of your role as set out in the Framework Document between the Welsh Government and the Library. The Framework requires the Government to be consulted on the appointment process, but does not require a Minister's approval for the advertisement before being published.

I accept that your intention was to ensure as wide a pool of candidates as possible, but your interventions and subsequent attempt to delay the publication of the advertisement raises serious concerns about propriety and accountability.

As Chair of the Committee, I am keen to ensure the Library can fulfil its remit as they see fit, and that the Welsh Government is not unduly influencing, or interfering in, the day to day operations of their work.


Working relationship with arms-length bodies

The emails do not portray a constructive working relationship and I am concerned this may have an adverse impact on the Library's ability to deliver its remit.

I am disappointed that political pressure is being used in this way. The people of Wales are entitled to expect their Government to trust an arms-length bodies to carry out its role without interference from the Deputy Minister.

I would be grateful if you could respond to my concerns in writing by 26 April.

Yours sincerely,



Bethan Sayed

Chair of the Committee



Ein cyf/Our ref: MA-p-DET-1625-19

Bethan Sayed AM
Chair
Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

1 May 2019

Dear Bethan

Thank you for your letter dated 2 April.

Your letter refers to my part in the process of appointing the new Chief Executive of the National Library. This issue was also raised by the Leader of Plaid Cymru in a recent letter to the First Minister, and if I may, I will refer you to his conclusions on this matter.

Having investigated, the First Minister concluded that 'the Welsh Government has a legitimate role in the process of appointing a new Chief Executive because under the prevailing Framework Agreement, the Library was obliged to consult the Welsh Government about its proposals'.

He added that it was *'entirely appropriate for the Deputy Minister to have a view on those proposals and to ask for that view to be conveyed to the National Library'*. He also noted that *'no complaint has been received from the National Library that it feels it has been the subject of inappropriate behaviour, at either official or ministerial level'*.

You also state that the emails released under the FoI request from Cymdeithas yr Iaith 'do not portray a constructive working relationship' between the Welsh Government and the National Library, and that you are 'concerned this may have an adverse impact on the National Library's ability to deliver its remit'. I can assure you that the working relationship is constructive, as some recent events serve to illustrate:

- The very constructive meeting I held at the Library on 14 February, with the President, the then Chief Librarian, and the new Chief Librarian (designate).
- On the same day, the positive discussions I held on-site with the President, and senior staff, about the scope to restore the Gregynog Gallery. The Library wishes to refurbish the gallery, and return it to its original size. I hope to make an announcement about this project very shortly.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Gohebiaeth.Dafydd.Elis-Thomas@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Dafydd.Elis-Thomas@gov.wales

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.

- The recent public appointment interviews for new Trustees, and a new Vice-President. These involved the Library's President, and two of my senior officials, alongside an independent member. I await their recommendations, but understand that to date the process has been very positive and collaborative.
- My recent decision (14 April) to award an extra £1.325 million in capital funding to the Library, over the next two years (2020-2022).

I and my officials are fully committed to ensuring that this positive relationship continues.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Elis-Thomas'.

Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas AC/AM

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Diwylliant, Chwaraeon a Thwristiaeth
Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism