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Music Consultancy & Choral Music Centre

**Senior Consultant: Dinah Pye AGSM, Dip. Ed, CFPS
Welsh Woman of the Year Winner**

28.1.20

Dear Petitions Committee

Petition:P-05-880

Firstly, can I thank the Panel for their patience regarding the above petition and for revisiting the application on Tuesday 4th February.

After much scrutiny of the Welsh Government's delayed Feasibility Study I can confirm that there is a great deal of discontent at the consultants lack of solutions, incorrect facts and inaccurate reporting of the current situation. These issues are to be revealed and discussed at the Stakeholders meeting on Wednesday 29th January in order to find a way forward.

I have looked again at the current situation and have attached my updated comments in a pdf titled Music Petition Update 27.1.20 along with my current CV.

The need to establish a National Plan with secure funding in line with the rest of the UK with a suitable inclusive model for all children is now even more urgent if the Welsh Government and local councils are going to maintain their legal and statutory obligations.

I look forward to your above meeting with the hope that your decision will help to bring the urgent situation to the fore to assist a way forward.

Yours sincerely

Dinah Pye

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MUSIC PETITION P-05-880 UPDATE 27.1.20

- * In 1999 I worked alongside my late colleague Helena Braithwaite MBE to secure ring fenced funding for music services which allowed music to flourish across Wales. Unfortunately in 2004 the funding was subsumed into the Revenue Grant with a negative effect that has gradually led to the present funding crisis.
- * In 2004 the UK Labour Government via David Miliband and Estelle Morris launched a Music Manifesto. As a signatory to this important manifesto and as the Welsh Consultant for the Arts Council of England's Youth Music Scheme I made every effort to get the manifesto adopted in Wales. The Welsh Government listened and attended an event at the Wales Millennium Centre along with Welsh stakeholders. The presentation by young people from Anglesey to Cardiff highlighted the need for sustainability and appropriate funding. The Welsh Government made promises to improve both the delivery and funding for music education but nothing happened.
- * I still have flashbacks of the late Rhodri Morgan (former First Minister) giving a speech in a plenary session and admitting that, "We took our eye off education". This quote may be out of context but it is now obvious that with regard to music education and the plight of the music services there has been little, if any, leadership, vision, support, development or consideration for appropriate funding.
- * It has been noted that England has had a National Plan for music with substantial funding since 2011. Other devolved nations also have a funded policy/strategy that are regularly reviewed and are funded in order to improve, strengthen and benefit youth music.
- * It is now five years since colleagues in Wales began to attempt to clarify ownership and the direction for music services in order to stem the severe decline to access and delivery. The Feasibility Report (page 13) clearly states the work of the Task & Finish Group and the Wales Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee consultation was sufficient evidence without the cost of another report.
- * The Welsh Culture Committee's report "Hitting the Right Note" and many other reports hit the nail on the head and gave us all the information we required to take urgent action. Hence my petition to get a debate in order to implement a National Plan to improve access to music education in Wales. There was no need for a Feasibility Study with a further ten month delay.
- * When I first met the Education Secretary (KW) in November 2017 to suggest that removing the National Youth Ensembles from the Welsh Government pyramid for music education and the launch of an Endowment Fund (Anthem) were not solutions that would stop the decline in access to music. Her response was that the music services were not in her portfolio and suggested that I speak to the newly appointed Lord Elis Thomas as it was in his brief. Unfortunately, although I gave him time to settle into his new position, he has, up to the present day, taken no interest in the ongoing crisis.
- * KW's first comment at the meeting with the Cultural Committee on 16 January and I quote, "The Feasibility Study enforces all other reports" is evidence that the report was not required and has led to time wasted in dealing with what is now an extremely critical situation.

- * At the same meeting Mick Antoniw, AM asked if there was a crisis. KW replied, “No but the music services are under pressure”. She later admitted that the Denbighshire Co-operative was set up because of a crisis. So YES there was and still is a crisis. Leadership and clarity, especially regarding funding, is absolutely imperative NOW or there will be no music teachers or music services left to rescue.
- * While the Feasibility Report endorses everything we already knew there are some facts that have been omitted as well as numerous incorrect statements. (These will be revealed at the Stakeholders meeting on 29.1.20). My investigations during the last two and a half years across Wales has highlighted that although there has been no political leadership and inadequate funding directors and music teachers have engaged in innovative survival strategies and even extended their scope to maintain access. There are several pockets of excellent and encouraging good practices that have not been included in the report. To highlight the Denbighshire Co-operative as the only good practice is an insult to all those struggling to ride the storm. KW has not visited any other service and the report and the Education Minister have failed to notice the outstanding achievements of Gwent Music Service, the free service delivered in Merthyr Tydfil, as well as the unacceptable situation in her own area of Powys delivered by committed volunteers. Music has become an out-of-reach, highly priced extra activity even though academics constantly say that it is an holistic and essential part of everyones, especially young peoples, life and well-being.
- * At present, apart from the Cultural Committee Consultation for “Hitting the Right Note” my petition is the only public response to the present crisis and so it is now time to insist that an urgent Plenary debate takes place to secure either legislation or a long term policy for a National Plan for Music that will deliver equity, access for all and appropriate funding.
- * At present Music is a core subject in the National Curriculum until the new Curriculum takes over. It is therefore noted that over the last 5 years or longer that the following current Act in Wales has not been adhered to. This has been a failure by Welsh Government ministers to monitor that councils have resorted to allowing Co-operatives and other models to replace what should still be the current situation of statutory access.

QUOTE

“A local education authority in Wales must ensure that their relevant education functions and their relevant training functions are exercised by the authority with a view to—

- a) promoting high standards, and
- (b) promoting the **fulfilment of learning potential by every person**”

- * There are daily reports of parents withdrawing from existing services because of the increasing fees as well as parents who are attending food banks as well as struggling with debts and hoping their children can continue to attend music sessions. Totally unacceptable.
- * The questions that need to be asked are:-
 - a) Why do young people have to pay to obtain music skills between the ages of 5-16/18 and are not charged for any other subject? Do young people have to pay for e.g. language or mathematical skills up to A level status?
 - b) Why do young people who cannot afford the increasing fees for music or have additional learning needs or qualify for free meals have to obtain financial support from outside the normal education funding system when it is all tax payers money? This exclusion, discrimination and alternative approach has to stop and replaced with a more inclusive financial policy. **All children** have **children's** rights, no matter who they are, where they come from, what they look like, what language they speak, whatever their background or what their culture is.

Further criteria to support this petition

- * If a National Plan (NP) is adopted then the content MUST be developed by all Welsh music and education stakeholders.
- * There must be an important debate across all domains regarding who and how the NP will be delivered. There are numerous agencies and organisations already in place so there is no call for any new organisations or a central quango. One of the most obvious ways forward from endless discussions, reports and partnerships is via four regional hubs (partnerships) possibly supported by local councils working together. There is a strong consensus that a NP and regional access is urgently required.
- * The new Welsh Curriculum expressive arts MUST have free statutory entitlement from age 5 to at least 16 for instrumental/vocal tuition but music MUST remain a stand alone subject. As I have been involved in pioneering Expressive Arts Faculties in London and the Midlands I can assure you that they do not work unless the skills for each subject are developed independently. Please note that learning about Joseph Parry's inspiring life, as suggested by the Education Minister, does not lead to students developing the skills to sing or play his music. However, developing the skills to sing or play his music can lead to his inspirational life story. It is not suggested however that Joseph Parry is a good starting point.
- * The NP requires a long term sustainable structure in order to produce equal opportunity, high standards, staff retention and staff development with suitable Terms & Conditions as well as the opportunity of reforming teacher training.
- * The Welsh Government needs to look urgently at how funding to the music services is delivered. Councils have to rely on Welsh Government funding via WLGA and then schools have to depend on the WLGA. This system needs to be simplified as the time taken to download funding to the services takes far too long. Unfortunately there is also the barrier of Head Teachers who because of cuts in budgets fail to offer adequate access. Barriers have to be reduced to ensure that a NP is effective for all with adequate funding and sensible outcomes.
- * Stakeholders in Wales have had to fight to get £3 million over two years whereas England have received £300 million since 2016 and recently received another £80 million. There are over 400,000 children in Welsh education with only approximately one-third being offered access to music. If a NP is adopted then the Welsh Government needs to cost the funding for more access with appropriate transitional funding while a NP is developed.
- * The Welsh Government and the United Nations have the following policy. "**Children and young people aged 18 and under, have the right to be safe, to play, to have an education, to be healthy and be happy**". Unfortunately there is grim evidence that this policy is being abused and not operational across Wales. It is disappointing that the Welsh Government has still not got its eye on all aspects of education.

Conclusion

In conclusion there has been a national crisis in delivering access to music for far too long. To maintain the contribution of music to the music industry, music community, Welsh GDP, well being, creativity, transitional skills and equality of opportunity the Welsh Government must now show that pontifications and more reports have to stop and that it is now time for action via clear leadership and realistic sustainable funding.

This petition is calling for an urgent full plenary debate with responsible timing in order to expose the existing crisis and demands that a decision to adopt a National Plan with sensible timetabling for its implementation is agreed as soon as possible so that stakeholders can begin to prepare a way forward with immediate effect.

Dinah Pye (Active Music Services)

