

Agenda – Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 3 – Senedd

Meeting date: 24 October 2024

Meeting time: 09.30

For further information contact:

Lleu Williams

Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

SeneddCulture@senedd.wales

Hybrid

Pre-meeting registration

(09.15 – 09.30)

Public

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(09.30)

2 Impact of funding reductions for culture and sport: Evidence session with local government representatives (8)

(09.30 – 10.30)

(Pages 1 – 29)

Roland Evans, Assistant Head of Economy and Community, Cyngor Gwynedd

Amanda Davies, Managing Director, Byw'n Iach

Huw Thomas, Culture, Arts and Leisure Spokesperson, Welsh Local Government Association

Sarah Ecob, Head of Economy and Culture, Conwy County Borough Council

Emily Owen, Deputy Leader, Conwy County Borough Council

Attached Documents:

Research brief



Cyngor Gwynedd consultation response (English Translation by Senedd Commission)

Welsh Local Government Association written evidence

Conwy County Borough Council consultation response

Break

(10.30 – 10.40)

3 Impact of funding reductions for culture and sport: Evidence session with sports representatives (9)

(10.40 – 11.40)

(Pages 30 – 46)

Andrew Howard, Chief Executive Officer, Welsh Sports Association

Fergus Feeney, Chief Executive Officer, Swim Wales

Vicki Sutton, Chief Executive Officer, Netball Wales

Attached Documents:

Welsh Sports Association consultation response

Swim Wales consultation response

4 Paper(s) to note

(11.40)

4.1 Impact of funding reductions for culture and sport

(Pages 47 – 80)

Attached Documents:

Letter to Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales: Inviting written evidence in relation to the Committee's inquiry into the impact of funding reductions for culture and sport – 14 October 2024

Letter from Graffeg: Expressing concerns about the financial support for the publishing sector in Wales – 14 October 2024

Letter from Firefly Press: Expressing concerns about the financial support for the publishing sector in Wales – 16 October 2024

Firefly Press Catalogue 2024

4.2 Welsh Government international relations

(Page 81)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee: Invitation to join the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee on a visit to Cardiff Airport – 16 October 2024

4.3 Public service broadcasting in Wales

(Page 82)

Attached Documents:

Correspondence from Ofcom: Providing an update on Channel 4 licence renewal – 15 October 2024

5 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting

(11.40)

Private

6 Impact of funding reductions for culture and sport: Consideration of citizen engagement findings

(11.40 – 11.55)

(Pages 83 – 104)

Attached Documents:

Engagement findings

7 Impact of funding reductions for culture and sport: Consideration of evidence

(11.55 – 12.20)

8 Cross-Committee visit to Ireland: Visit report and next steps

(12.20 – 12.30)

(Pages 105 – 117)

Attached Documents:

Draft visit report

Document is Restricted

IFRCS20 Roland Evans, Assistant Head of Economy and Community, Cyngor Gwynedd

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol | Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Effaith Gostyngiadau Cyllid ar Ddiwylliant a Chwaraeon | Impact of Funding Reductions for Culture and Sport

Ymateb gan: Roland Evans, Pennaeth Cynorthwyol Economi a Chymuned, Cyngor Gwynedd | Evidance from: Roland Evans, Assistant Head of Economy and Community, Cyngor Gwynedd

1. What impacts has reduced funding had on your organisation and sector so far?

A reduction in budgets is considered to have affected areas of leisure by :

- Reducing the authority's ability to invest in leisure and wellbeing provisions and facilities. In practice, this includes :
- A reduction in the value of the Healthy Living delivery agreement due to significant inflationary costs
- The ability to invest in facility maintenance to an acceptable standard
- Real-terms reductions to budgets from Welsh Government - which come through Sport Wales, Actif North Wales and Health. E.g. Actif Young People, Free Swimming, the 60+ programme, NERS and Play Grants which fund holiday projects for children and young people.
- Financial challenges and uncertainties make it difficult to plan ahead into the medium term. That leaves high staff turnover and loss of expertise and a reduction in capacity. E.g. it is very difficult to recruit Bilingual Professional Practice Officers to the NERS Team. Annual funding offers only and coming very late in the previous financial year. Staff turnover always reduces the level of service for vulnerable residents, as a period of re-training new staff is required.

- A lack of medium-term funding arrangements is also a challenge on top of reductions. That leaves high staff turnover and loss of expertise and a reduction in capacity. E.g. it is very difficult to recruit Bilingual Professional Practice Officers to the NERS Team. Annual funding offers only and coming very late in the previous financial year. Staff turnover always reduces the level of service for vulnerable residents, as a period of re-training new staff is required.

Culture:

- We have had to cut Archives opening hours.
- We have lost professional staff across our cultural services in archives, museums and libraries and have made redundancies or not filled jobs to make savings.
- We have restructured library services and closed some locations.
- Our Library Service for schools will be coming to an end.
- Our Library Lorry service has ended.
- We have cut the total grant fund for supporting the arts in the county.
- We have closed Neuadd Buddug in Bala.
- We have closed the Quaker Heritage Centre in Dolgellau.
- We have sought to review business plans for improving the efficiency of Storiell Museum and Gallery, Lloyd George Museum and Neuadd Dwyfor arts centre in Pwllheli.
- Our budgets for hosting activities and marketing and communications have been reduced which is affecting our ability to attract audiences and visitors in certain locations.

2. What measures have you taken in light of it, such as changing what you do and how you do it?

Leisure:

- Have had to increase user fees

- Have had to reduce staffing levels and therefore the quality and scope of the service
- Decision not to market the NERS scheme due to lack of staffing capacity to cope with the "real" demand.
- Have introduced energy efficiency measures
- Have had to manage pay levels which mean that they do not compare favourably with work in other sectors, which leads to high turnover and high costs of recruitment and re-training.

Culture:

- We have increased entrance fees at Lloyd George Museum and at Neuadd Dwyfor.
- We have increased fees generally across cultural services.
- We have reduced staffing numbers which puts pressure on service delivery in times of illness or staff leave.
- We have reviewed business plans with the aim of being more commercial.
- We have ceased recruitment to support staff posts such as Museum Education Officer or Museum Engagement Officer due to lack of budget.
- We have discontinued some key activities e.g. reading competitions, arts events etc.
- We are having to reduce the amount of engagement activities.

3. To what extent will these impacts be irreversible (e.g. venues closing, or specialist skills being lost rather than a temporary restriction in activities)?

Leisure:

- Long-term impact of inflation in fees.
- Long-term impact in staff turnover and loss of expertise.

- Long-term impact on the condition of facilities and equipment, due to the inability to invest adequately in the maintenance and replacement of equipment and facilities,

Culture:

We have closed venues as set out in question 1 – library sites, Neuadd Buddug in Bala and the Quaker Centre.

The loss of support staff is affecting visitor numbers and engagement across the county.

4. What interventions would you like to see from the Welsh Government, beyond increased funding?

Leisure

- Collaborate to establish an additional Referral to Practice Programme for non-chronic conditions. Several local authorities have piloted work that suggests such interventions can be financially self-sustaining if health sector input is secured in terms of referrals. It can be a very valuable preventive intervention and reduce demand on the health sector while making leisure facilities more self-sustainable.
- Re-visit the Curriculum for Wales to place a clearer emphasis on ensuring that all children learn to swim as a necessary life skill. The national transport framework should also be looked at to take into account school travel costs (particularly in rural areas)
- Commit to medium term funding arrangements for all grants in this area e.g. a minimum of 3 years to provide job security for the workforce / reduce turnover / loss of experience and resource waste. And a reasonable process within the terms and conditions of the NERS scheme to review user fees – as a contribution towards delivery costs.
- Revise the Free Swimming Grant to set clearer expectations that correspond better to the level of investment available and follow clear priorities. E.g. being able to use it to target children and young people who are unable to swim

Culture:

- Having fiscal interventions over a longer period would facilitate service delivery.
- Ensuring a better correlation with health and social preventive services and using a component of their budgets could create better provision and outcomes in the long term.
- Facilitating better relationships between the Department for Culture, Arts Council, bodies such as Amgueddfa Cymru and the National Library of Wales and the Royal Commission with Local Authorities and the wider sector.

5. To what extent do the impacts you describe fall differently on people with protected characteristics and people of a lower socioeconomic status?

Leisure:

The pressure is heavier on several groups:

- Low-income households suffer as fees rise to meet the financial gap. Children from a low income household are completely dependent on school swimming in order to learn to swim and if their school does not prioritise that, then the risk of them not being able to swim increases significantly. These families in rural areas also suffer from reduced service in other areas e.g. lack of public transport to be able to reach leisure facilities.
- Older and vulnerable adults are affected by a lack of capacity within the NERS scheme. This group often do not have the skills or confidence to practise independently so access to the scheme means they have a real opportunity to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing and in many cases be able to live independently for longer.
- Residents in rural areas are affected due to the higher cost of providing facilities and the lack of private sector presence as an alternative. Some facilities in South Gwynedd have a catchment of around 5,000 people, which is not commercially sustainable. This leads to reduced opening hours, lower staffing levels and limited programmes.

Culture:

- Increasing fees is going to have an impact on everyone but especially those from low income households.
- Access to some services has been curtailed for everyone, but library closures and the curtailment of archive opening hours specifically are likely to affect user groups with protected characteristics and rural areas.
- Reducing arts grants is going to affect the ability of some providers to work with certain groups with protected characteristics and rural areas.
- Not recruiting to certain positions e.g. Museum Education Officer and Museum Engagement Officer will have an effect on groups with protected characteristics and low-income families – and many in rural areas.

6. Do you have any other points you wish to raise within the scope of this inquiry?

The Government has recently published the draft Priorities for Culture 2024 to 2030 document. While we welcome the priorities and aspirations; there is concern about the ability of Government, Local Authorities and the culture sector to be able to deliver on these priorities without ensuring adequate budgets and effective collaboration.

At a time of further cuts and savings - it will be difficult to maintain the status quo let alone achieve any further aspirations and priorities however commendable they are.

Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee: inquiry into the impact of funding reductions for culture and sport

Sharon Davies, Head of Education

sharon.davies@wlga.gov.uk

Welsh Local Government Association - The Voice of Welsh Councils

The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) is a politically led cross party organisation that seeks to give local government a strong voice at a national level.

We represent the interests of local government and promote local democracy in Wales.

The 22 councils in Wales are our members and the 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities are associate members.

We believe that the ideas that change people's lives, happen locally.

Communities are at their best when they feel connected to their council through local democracy. By championing, facilitating, and achieving these connections, we can build a vibrant local democracy that allows communities to thrive.

Our ultimate goal is to promote, protect, support and develop democratic local government and the interests of councils in Wales.

We'll achieve our vision by

- Promoting the role and prominence of councillors and council leaders
- Ensuring maximum local discretion in legislation or statutory guidance
- Championing and securing long-term and sustainable funding for councils
- Promoting sector-led improvement
- Encouraging a vibrant local democracy, promoting greater diversity
- Supporting councils to effectively manage their workforce



Response

This response has been informed by views from Chief Leisure Officers and Chief Culture and Libraries Officers across the 22 councils in Wales.

For context, local government funding (adjusted for inflation) in Wales has decreased by 12% between 2009-2010 and 2023-2024. Consequently, local government's spending on 'culture and recreation' and 'libraries' has fallen by 33% and 43% respectively between 2009-10 and 2021-22¹. Local government in Wales is facing a £432 million funding gap². This is in addition to the funding cuts to the Arts Council for Wales and Sport Wales, which have a direct impact on leisure and culture trusts where they are managing leisure and culture in partnership with councils in Wales.

What impacts has reduced funding had on your organisation and sector so far?

- A reduction in the investment by Councils due to their reduced Revenue Support Grant (RSG) block grant and unprecedented pressures on health and social care budgets are compounding the problem for non-statutory services such as Leisure and Culture. Cost of living pressures and increased energy costs have also created a perfect storm for the sector.
- Reductions in real terms to budgets from the Welsh Government which come through Sport Wales, Regional Sports Partnerships and Health - for example the Active Young People area, Free Swimming, the 60+ programme, National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS) and Play Grants which fund holiday projects for children and young people.
- Lack of medium-term financing arrangements is also a challenge. This often leads to high staff turnover and a loss of expertise and a reduction in capacity with short term contracts and 12-week redundancy notice periods meaning projects struggle to deliver fully and consistently. This is exacerbated when trying to recruit bilingual Professional Practice Officers to NERS Teams or swimming instructors and pool operators in more rural areas. Annual financial offers only and come very late in the previous financial year. Staff turnover each time reduces the level of service for vulnerable residents, as a period of recruiting (which can typically take 3 months in a council setting) and retraining new staff is required.

¹ Welsh Local Government Association. Resourcing local services 2024-25. An outlook of the pressures faced by local services. Available at:

<https://www.wlga.wales/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=62&mid=665&fileid=3988>

² Welsh Local Government Association. February 2024. £25 million welcomed by local government, but sustainable long-term funding needed. Available at: <https://www.wlga.wales/25-million-welcomed-by-local-government-but-sustainable-long-term-funding-needed>



- Reductions in opening hours meaning less access to facilities and less access to activities and events that contribute to positive mental health, lifelong learning opportunities or simply help reduce social isolation.
- Having to increase fees and charges when there is already a cost-of-living crisis.
- Having to reduce provision or end it completely, particularly schemes that have been funded under the soon-to-end Shared Prosperity Fund.
- Staffing reductions. Staff have been cut or reduced and not replaced. This has an impact on staff morale, retention and recruitment. The loss of technical expertise / professional staff is a particular problem, for example, in theatre/archives.
- Added pressure on creaking infrastructure and a challenge to maintain existing (built and outdoor) facilities to an acceptable standard (particularly challenging on listed buildings in Cultural sector). Inability to maintain or modernise ageing buildings - repairs and maintenance costs have significantly increased - and reduction in councils' ability to meet any unforeseen costs. Reductions to capital budgets mean only urgent works are possible.
- Inability to invest in new equipment or adopt new technology.
-
- Reduced budgets for hosting activities and marketing and communications affecting councils' ability to attract audiences and visitors in certain locations.

What measures have you taken in light of it, such as changing what you do and how you do it?

- Keeping opening hours under review - opening earlier and closing earlier in response to user demand.
- Increasing user fees - this is particularly tricky with cost-of-living pressures on the tipping point of excessive charges leading to non-engagement and thus a potential downward spiral in income.
- Not replacing council officers and instead commissioning external partners to lead on programmes on a council's behalf.
- Looking for alternative funding sources such as grants and partnerships with businesses.



- Reinventing the ways in which services operate in order to sustain them whilst simultaneously reducing spending, for example moving to multi-use buildings that house not just libraries but other local services.
- Introduced energy efficiency measures - for example solar panels on facility roofs - and invested in green technology where possible.
- Greater collaboration with other sectors / partners / departments.
- Greater reliance on the voluntary sector and external funding.

To what extent will these impacts be irreversible (e.g. venues closing, or specialist skills being lost rather than a temporary restriction in activities)?

- Fee inflation will drive users away; facilities which have committed to being affordable are finding themselves in a position where they have no choice but to increase costs, with a knock-on effect on the community organisations seeking to use them.
- Staff turnover and loss of key skills and capacity - impact on succession planning with sector-wide staffing shortages becoming more apparent in some areas, for example theatre technicians.
- Long term impact on the condition of facilities and equipment due to the inability to invest adequately in their maintenance and replacement.
- Reductions in opening hours can have a particular impact in rural areas if local facilities are not open to the same level. This can have a knock-on effect with cancelled memberships, which in turn reduces income.

What interventions would you like to see from the Welsh Government, beyond increased funding?

- Greater national recognition of the preventative role the sector plays in terms of health and social care, and its contribution to the economy. Encourage early intervention with culture and leisure/sports activities as a cheaper and better option than waiting until more expensive, specialist, intervention is needed.
- A commitment to medium term funding arrangements for all grants in the field, for example and minimum of three years to provide job security for the workforce / reduce turnover / loss of experience and waste of resources.



- Developing social prescribing. Collaborate to establish an additional Practice Referral Program for non-chronic conditions. Several councils have piloted work which suggests that such an intervention can be financially self-sustaining if it receives input from the health sector in terms of referrals. It can be a very valuable preventative intervention and reduce demand on the health sector while making leisure facilities more self-sustaining.
- Allow councils to align NERS user fees with local pricing structures, which in turn makes the scheme more viable and allows for greater throughput of clients who in turn potentially become ongoing users of leisure centres.
- Give consideration to reducing or removing the NDR paid on council leisure buildings in the same way as every charitable trust and outsourced leisure service benefits.
- Give consideration to the lowering of energy tariffs for organisations whose main aim is the maintenance and improvement of people's physical or mental well-being.
- Increased flexibility for local approaches to achieving national priorities rather than blanket policies / approaches.

To what extent do the impacts you describe fall differently on people with protected characteristics and people of a lower socioeconomic status?

- Reductions in services and fee increases impact on all groups' ability to take part in leisure or cultural activities. But there is a disproportionate impact on people with protected characteristics and those of a lower socioeconomic status.
- Low-income households suffer as fees increase to address the financial gap. Children from low-income households are often completely dependent on school swimming in order to learn to swim. If their school does not prioritise that, the risk of them not being able to swim increases significantly.
- Families and schools, in particular in rural areas, also suffer due to a reduction in service in other areas, for example lack of public transport to be able to reach leisure facilities. Residents in rural areas are affected because the cost of providing facilities is higher and there is limited alternative private sector presence.
- Older and vulnerable adults affected by a lack of capacity within the NERS (or other referral scheme). This group often do not have the skills or confidence to practice independently so access to the scheme means they have a real



opportunity to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing and, in many cases, be able to live independently longer.

Cleared by:

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IFRCS26 Sarah Ecob, Head of Economy and Culture, Conwy County Borough Council

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Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol | Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Effaith Gostyngiadau Cyllid ar Ddiwylliant a Chwaraeon | Impact of Funding Reductions for Culture and Sport

Ymateb gan: Sarah Ecob, Pennaeth yr Economi a Diwylliant, Cyngor Bwrdeistrefol Sir Conwy | Evidence from: Sarah Ecob, Head of Economy and Culture, Conwy County Borough Council

1. What impacts has reduced funding had on your organisation and sector so far?

We are currently covering gaps left by reduced funding using SPF grants. When this funding comes to an end later this year we face a cliff-edge in terms of local provision. It is likely that cultural & sports activities such as our groups for young people (in libraries, Family Centres, leisure centres and theatres), afterschool & holiday provision and our groups for adults will largely come to an end. We have strong evidence of the positive impact these groups are having on mental and physical wellbeing, thus reducing impacts for CAMHS, our local health board and social services. Young participants also report greater engagement and progress at school due to the groups they are involved with. Our relatively cheap activities being reduced will undoubtedly have a longer-term, more expensive outcome.

In terms of the sector, we are having regular conversations with organisations who are on the verge of closure. In one case this is an organisation that has existed for over 140 years. This loss of provision is extremely concerning as it is unlikely that it will be recreated once it has gone.

The loss of our own provision and that of local organisations impacts mainly on members of our community who are experiencing difficulties, in particular those who are not financially well off. Whilst those with money can often find ways to continue with creative activities, those with less find themselves unable to engage

with cultural activities. This will lead to a further widening of the class disparity in our society.

Some specific examples include reduced spend on library resources including a reduction down to only two professional Librarians to cover the whole county. We are also considering reducing library opening hours by 25%. We have people using the libraries every day as a sanctuary and we know that if we close for a day a week these people are likely to present themselves at their GPs or to Social Services which will cost considerably more.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. This will have an economic impact locally and will also mean the players of the future aren't able to see elite sport played in their area. One third of the Welsh women's team are from North Wales so the loss of matches in the area will likely impact on the future development of women.

2. What measures have you taken in light of it, such as changing what you do and how you do it?

Conwy County Borough Council is exploring all options to balance our budgets. As non-statutory services, our theatres, leisure provision and culture teams are at huge risk. If we have to close any of our facilities we will never get them back.

We are working with colleagues in the health service to identify ways of increasing cultural and sport social prescribing, which we hope will attract additional funding through trusts & foundations, the lottery etc to help fill some of the gaps currently being created.

We have merged services and are looking at co-location of provision to reduce building costs.

Our culture strategy, "Creu Conwy: Creating the Spark", has helped us to engage with new partners and extend our work with others to deliver greater reach with reduced funding.

We have moved away from event delivery, instead working to support event producers based in the area and those coming in to the area. This does mean that we can no longer deliver major events (which would previously have been run in conjunction with the BBC, Armed Forces, sporting organisations etc) that brought high levels of economic impact to the area.

Our theatres and leisure services have been directed to be entirely commercially focused, resulting in less provision for those in deprivation.

Professional library tasks have been re-allocated, e.g. out-sourced to suppliers, or contractors, activities for customers and outreach work to attract new users will be impacted.

Delivery of the Library and Information Strategy 2021.2026 and Creu Conwy - Creating the Spark are being reduced due to the lack of resources.

3. To what extent will these impacts be irreversible (e.g. venues closing, or specialist skills being lost rather than a temporary restriction in activities)?

As mentioned above, the loss of organisations is likely irreversible.

We are likely to see a reduction in culture & sports staff when SPF funding comes to an end, creating a downward spiral of not enough people to raise money or deliver events leading to less money leading to a further reduction of staff.

The uncertainty staff and freelancers are facing is already leading to people leaving the industry and a reduction in available skilled professional staff. Staff are moving to better paid jobs outside of the local authority and the interest, from experienced staff, in vacancies is not as high as it would have previously been.

The evidence for the positive impact of engagement with culture & sport and of the efficiency of money spent (reducing GP visits etc) is huge. Sadly, this will likely result in an increase in social service budget requirements which will lead to further reductions in money available for cultural provision.

Venue Cymru contributes £33.5m to the local economy annually. Reduced funding is putting the centre at risk. We remain hopefully that the £10million offered in the March UK budget will be honoured but this is yet to be confirmed. The funding will not only enable replacement of 30 year old technical equipment and 20 year old seating but would also see the development of a cultural hub with a health board social prescribing base, co-location of the library and provision of cultural industry spaces.

We are working to find ways to keep at least a minimum provision of each of our services open. We are keenly aware that if we close facilities the chances of them re-opening are close to non-existent. We have already reduced our staff numbers and lost many experts within the authority.

Specialist skills have been lost relating to book selection, the preventative health agenda libraries contribute towards and increased pressure on remaining staff.

4. What interventions would you like to see from the Welsh Government, beyond increased funding?

Promoting the prevention agenda that the arts & sports deliver. Encouraging early intervention with culture & sports activities as a cheaper and better option than waiting until more expensive, specialist intervention is needed. Likewise for recovery programmes.

Developing social prescribing. This had been very successful with the National Exercise Referral Scheme with our leisure service and the model could be easily extended to additional sports activities and to the arts. We are currently working with colleagues in the health service to develop a new social prescribing hub. WG support for initiatives such as this would be very welcome.

Where funding is available, awarding it on a 3 year basis would help to ensure sensible planning and the best use of public funds. One year funding results in reduced impacts and a greater difficulty in securing partnership working.

Opening up funded apprenticeship schemes to local government so the wealth of talent we have can be used to train those who want to come into culture & sport. Many of our jobs provide transferable skills and provide an excellent base of knowledge for young people entering the workforce.

Greater awareness of the jobs available in the creative & sports industries and training for school careers advisors so they understand and promote these roles.

Advocacy and championing the work of the sector in delivering agendas for WG sections beyond the Culture Section e.g. education, transport (bus pass applications) and supporting the preventative health agenda.

WG Sector colleagues could provide an overview of the current impact of this financial situation from information collated in the Welsh Public Library Standards reports, considering the reduced budget, spend on library resources and number of library staff and professional library staff, this data can be compared year on year.

5. To what extent do the impacts you describe fall differently on people with protected characteristics and people of a lower socioeconomic status?

The impacts fall mostly on people with protected characteristics and of a lower socioeconomic status. Those with money can afford to pay for music lessons, gyms, theatre tickets, art classes etc. Those without, who could often benefit most, get left behind.

The arts deliver significant economic benefits to our towns, driving tourism and visitor numbers in particular. The supply chain impact is also an important area of impact. The economic impact of up to £33.5m p.a to the local area delivered by Venue Cymru is of particular importance to local hotels and restaurants. This supports many entry-level and minimum wage jobs in the area which will be the first to go as provision diminishes. Local businesses will also be adversely impacted as purchasing reduces leading to job losses at best and closure at worst for specialist organisations.

Reducing access e.g. due to less library opening hours will impact those actively seeking employment through use of library resources and facilities / computers for example. Reduces staff capacity for developing and provision of support through relevant activities with groups with protected characteristics.

Reduced access to physical activity is proven to reduce wellbeing which in turn impacts working lives and the need for additional interventions from medical and social services professionals.

6. Do you have any other points you wish to raise within the scope of this inquiry?

There is a huge evidence base that shows involvement with culture and with physical activities helps to improve wellbeing, reduces visits to medical professionals and reduces the need for social services assistance. Whilst the arts and sports are not a cure-all, they play an extremely important role in both prevention and in recovery and the costs of these interventions are relatively small. We would be happy to share specific examples to demonstrate this.

IFRCS46 Matthew Williams, Head of Policy and Communications, Welsh Sports Association

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Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol | Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Effaith Gostyngiadau Cyllid ar Ddiwylliant a Chwaraeon | Impact of Funding Reductions for Culture and Sport

Ymateb gan: Matthew Williams, Pennaeth Polisi a Chyfathrebu, Cymdeithas Chwaraeon Cymru | Evidence from: Matthew Williams, Head of Policy and Communications, Welsh Sports Association

1. What impacts has reduced funding had on your organisation and sector so far?

In short, the impact of the reduced funding on the sector has been significant – at the end of 2023 the sector received news that Sport Wales would receive a 10.5% cut to its budget across 2024/2025. As Sport Wales primarily distributes this budget to the sector it was inevitable that this would cause significant issues within the sport sector.

To its credit, Sport Wales was able to respond very quickly to this news and informed the sector that it was, on a one off basis, able to absorb a significant amount of the cut. However, it is clear that Sport Wales has very little ability to make further cuts to its own budget (see for example the Sport Wales submission to this committee on the budget for 2024/2025) without significant impact on service delivery to the sector. This paints a worrying picture for future budget rounds.

Contextually, the sector has broadly been dealing with reduced cash and real term budgets on an annual basis since at least 2012, with just a few years of increased spend during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

In addition, due to the results of the 2022 School Sports Survey, funded partners of Sport Wales – primarily national governing bodies of sport – were already planning for significant changes (both positive and negative) to their grant

allocations for every financial year to 2027. These were already having a significant impact on staffing and operational plans across a number of funded bodies – the further announced cut is in addition to and has compounded this.

In total, £2.5m was cut from the Sport Wales budget in 2024/2025 – Wales direct spending on sport, already at the lower end of comparator nations, now compares very unfavourably even to other nations within the United Kingdom. This is despite Welsh Government ostensibly recognising the power of the sector to deliver against a wide range of its objectives, perhaps best exemplified by the wide ranging nature of the Sport Wales remit letter for this term of Government. However, without adequate financial support, the ability of the sector to meet these objectives, as well as meet their own core organisational purposes are threatened.

Furthermore, due to the difficult Local Government financial settlement and the non-statutory nature of Leisure services, many if not all Local Authorities across Wales have reduced their Sport and Leisure budgets. This has had wide ranging impacts, but we have seen significant uplifts in fees and charges for access to facilities, changes in opening hours of facilities, and significant recruitment challenges. There have also been changes to patterns of maintenance which have created severe backlogs, in particular reports of issues relating to grass pitches and associated toilet and shower blocks are widespread. Other cuts in Local Authorities, for example in planning services are also having an impact on the ability to deliver new facilities or renew existing facilities.

Elsewhere, schemes such as the National Exercise Referral programme, which a number of leisure providers are heavily involved in delivering have not seen substantive changes to their fee structure for at least a decade, leaving some providers in very difficult positions with regard the future delivery of such an important and successful intervention.

Similarly, there have also been a number of temporary schemes that have emerged and disappeared year on year - some of which had good results in increasing engagement in physical activity but were not continued beyond the initial funding period.

In practical terms, we are aware of a significant number of redundancies across funded partners, as well as recruitment freezes. More worryingly for the sector, pay rates are now extremely unfavourable against other sectors and many are reporting significant difficulty in recruiting, especially into middle management and mid career roles.

Budget uncertainty for the next financial year and beyond is also now hampering the sectors ability to plan. We would hope that following the UK Government's Comprehensive Spending Review, that Welsh Government is once again in a position to provide strong indicative three year budgets – potentially even with a funding floor commitment – to again allow the sector to plan on a medium term basis.

2. What measures have you taken in light of it, such as changing what you do and how you do it?

The sector has been engaged in a significant volume of work over the past decade in terms of its resilience, and this has been accelerated over the previous 9 months.

A number of measures have been taken and are being examined – these include as examples:

- Moves towards shared services models. For example, the WSA hosts a shared book-keeping resource for our members.
- Shared procurement – the WSA hosts a procurement portal for the sector, which is open for our entire network of around 6000 sports clubs.
- Organisations looking to pool resources and expertise.

Our members have also been engaged in significant efforts to bring additional funding into the sector from outside sources – though these successes have been mixed, and in some cases have led to a reliance on year to year or project funding that present challenges in terms of programme longevity.

3. To what extent will these impacts be irreversible (e.g. venues closing, or specialist skills being lost rather than a temporary restriction in activities)?

We are aware of small number of community facilities that have faced significant financial difficulty in recent years – for example Harlech Swimming Pool and Cardigan Swimming Pool have closed on at least a temporary basis. Neither of these organisations were directly funded by Sport Wales or the Welsh Government, however they have been dependent on the availability of grant funding for modernisation and investment, and substantially benefited from

Government programmes. They had also both been part of Community Asset Transfer schemes, and given the anticipated trajectory of leisure services in Local Authorities dependence on this model this presents a worrying future. Particularly for rural areas.

Knowledge loss from the sector has already been significant. Leadership turnover over the last few years has been high with 16 new CEOs amongst the 26 CEOs who make up the highest funded National Governing Bodies, though this may also be attributable to the Covid19 Legacy that has been felt across a number of sectors. Low wages, and job uncertainty must however play a role in this.

£24m of capital funding has been allocated to Sport Wales by the Welsh Government over the previous three years. This has been very welcome and allowed significant investment in the sector. However, there is no commitment to this level of funding beyond the end of the financial year. At least this level of funding should be maintained.

There have been significant challenges in the Local Authority leisure sector in recent years. Neath Port Talbot is in the process of changing the operating model for its Leisure Services, and we are aware that there are significant costs associated with this. The WSA remains agnostic on the model Local Authorities use depending on their local circumstances (direct management, trust, trading company etc) but we are concerned that sudden changes to the model are often the point at which delivery to end customers is impacted. For example, rationalisation of an estate as management changes occur that could lead to permanent closures. As budget pressures in Local Authorities continue this should be closely monitored to ensure a network of safe, accessible and cheap to use facilities is maintained across Wales.

4. What interventions would you like to see from the Welsh Government, beyond increased funding?

- Multiyear funding certainty and a move away from one-off single year project funding that doesn't allow for proper business planning and job certainty. This is especially true for organisations who work at the intersection of sport/physical activity and wider community engagement or tackling poverty work.
- A review of planning rules relating to sporting facilities with a view to easing refurbishment, renovation and change of use. Current financial barriers can be significant, and with cuts in Local Authorities the

availability of planning officers with significant knowledge can and does lead to large backlogs.

- i. A number of WSA members are also reporting significant planning delays in installing EV chargers as a means to raise revenue at their sites.
- Explore allowing sport to opt-in to registered childcare status, allowing families to claim for wrap around sports provision via Universal Credit.
 - A clearer articulation of the fundamental link between the roles and responsibilities of Local Government, Welsh Government, Sport Wales and funded partners. Activities directly funded by Sport Wales [sports participation and pathway] and Welsh Government [major events etc] will not take place without public spaces largely managed by Local Government. Similarly, NHS investment in physical activity via schemes such as NERS, prehab/rehab largely utilise the local government estate. These are inextricably linked but often treated as separate and distinct entities in policy making. In addition, this could articulate a clear view on the benefits of co-location of services that might increase footfall and uptake.
 - A systematic approach to leveraging community schools programme to enhance public access to sports facilities, especially in rural areas. So far experiences have been mixed.
 - A realistic assessment of the capital cost of renewing and refreshing the public sporting estate across Wales - and a plan to tackle outstanding maintenance backlogs.
 - Sport offers some significant opportunities to enable other Welsh Government agendas. The significant estates held by Welsh organisations offer an opportunity to increase the sustainability and lower the climate footprint of Wales. At a sustainability in sport conference last year, the then Deputy Minister for Sport said “this event highlights the need for forward-thinking within the sector and beyond to achieve net zero, sustainability, and low carbon outcomes in sport, now and into the future.” However, crucially, reduced budgets is already meaning that our members can only deliver the core business of their sport only, and find it difficult to meet these wider social challenges.

5. To what extent do the impacts you describe fall differently on people with protected characteristics and people of a lower socioeconomic status?

It is well established that those with protected characteristics and those in lower socioeconomic groups are less likely to participate in physical activity, and less likely to do so on a lifelong basis.

Wales had made some progress on improving these trends up to 2020, though with the pandemic and its impacts on participation clearing into an inflation crisis the sector has been fighting to stand still. Any cuts in funding, especially in the future, will have a direct impact on the ability to deliver programmes in the communities who are most likely to benefit from increased access to sport and leisure.

In short, it is impossible to deliver a “more equal Wales” in the context of reduced funding – and this will have a direct impact on the long term health and wellbeing of the Welsh population. Measured over the course of decades.

Sport Wales has significant data on equalities and Welsh sport and leisure that are instructive.

6. Do you have any other points you wish to raise within the scope of this inquiry?

Rurality presents significant challenges to the delivery of sport and leisure services. Many sports are dependent on specific, fixed infrastructure, and operating this is difficult to impossible on a commercial basis in areas with a sparse population without public support. Traditionally Local Authority leisure provision has provided some of this backbone, though this now seems to face an uncertain future. In addition to this, adequate public transport to leisure services must be considered in network mapping – especially if the Welsh Government is to move towards regulated bus services. As it stands, Welsh Government do not currently have an expressed position on sport, leisure and physical activity that articulates the roles that different parts of the public and funded sectors are seen and expected to contribute to its agenda. Whilst there is a Vision for Sport in Wales that the sector endorses, this does not serve quite the same role as expressed Government policy which the Senedd is able to scrutinise. We are left in a position where, for example, the Welsh Government currently has no stated position on the future of Wales leisure estate, beyond funding for Local Government in the shape of the Revenue Support Grant and occasional limited references during the Local Government Finance Settlement.

Similarly, whilst the opening of the school estate to the public has consistently been advocated for by the sport sector progress on doing so has been slow – despite a Welsh Labour manifesto commitment in 2020 and 2016.

Sport, Leisure and physical activity make a substantial contribution to Wales economy and sense of self, as well as our position on the world stage. Whilst the Welsh Government markets to the world based on our sporting success, or as a destination to participate or watch major sporting events, we risk undermining the public's ability to access and enjoy the benefits of physical activity by making short term cuts to what is ultimately a very small part of the Welsh Government's overall budget. Indeed, the converse is true – for a relatively small (in proportion to the overall budget) additional investment, sport and leisure would be able to deliver far more against Wales' wider objectives.

IFRCS37 Fergus Feeney, Chief Executive Officer, Swim Wales

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol | Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Effaith Gostyngiadau Cyllid ar Ddiwylliant a Chwaraeon | Impact of Funding Reductions for Culture and Sport

Ymateb gan: Fergus Feeney, Prif Swyddog Gweithredol, Nofio Cymru | Evidence from: Fergus Feeney, Chief Executive Officer, Swim Wales

1. What impacts has reduced funding had on your organisation and sector so far?

Reduced funding into Swim Wales and the Welsh aquatics sector is negatively impacting the delivery of key Swim Wales initiatives and operations, but is ultimately affecting the health, wellbeing and safety of the nation.

Aquatic Estate (Swimming Pools)

- The condition of aquatics facilities in Wales has been in steady decline for a decade. - Recent insight taken from the 2024 Swim Wales Facility Audit shows Welsh leisure centers and pools are rapidly becoming unfit for purpose.

- 80% of swimming pools in Wales are over 20 years old. Average age of the estate:
- 50 % were built prior to 1979
- 20%: 1980-1989
- 15%: 1990-1999
- 12%: 2000
- 2010 to now 3%
- In the last 10 years, only 11 sites across all 22 local authorities in Wales have been refurbished or renovated.

- 39 have made small upgrades to their facility and the remainder have had no refurbishments at all.
- Only 20% of responders to the 2024 Swim Wales Facility Audit noted that they had taken any sustainability measures, meaning swimming pool operators are facing huge challenges to contribute to the Welsh Government's net zero target for 2030.
- Lack of capital funds or available investment has resulted in higher maintenance and running costs.
- Swim Wales as the National Governing Body for aquatic activity and sports in Wales is extremely concerned about the efficiencies, sustainability and future of Welsh swimming pools over the next 10 years.

Accessibility

- Swimming lessons - Rising costs coupled with reduced investment are limiting children's opportunities to learn to swim across all of our delivery partners in Wales.
- The average cost of a 30-minute swimming lesson in Wales is £7.66, an increase of 30% in the last three years.
- This increase in cost means the price of a lesson is more than double the national average available spend on active sport* (£3.52)
- The current demographic in swimming lessons is white middle-class, and any attempts from Swim Wales and its national partners to make swimming lessons accessible to all has been made extremely difficult due to reductions in funding and increased costs.
- The Active Adults Survey (Sport Wales) 2022 suggests that 16% of adults want to do more fitness activities, with 218,000 adults currently aquatically active with 172,000 latent demand. Access to leisure swimming and/or fitness classes which will contribute significantly to the health of our nation is at severely threatened by the lack of funding and increased costs.
- Free Swimming remains one of the positives in this picture as this funding (£1.5m) enables local authorities and operators to create accessible offers for the Welsh public.

- School swimming is at its worst position for over a generation due to reduced funding and increased costs.
- As of August 2024, only 42% of children in Years 3-6 can swim in Wales. This means that 21,000 children will enter secondary education this September unable to swim and at greater risk of drowning in their teenage years.
- School Swimming is the only opportunity for ALL Welsh children regardless of background or class to learn this vital life skill - there are 182,178 children aged 7-11 years / Years 3-6 in Wales)
- Attempts by the national governing body and its national partners to increase accessibility in diverse and underserved communities have been met with barriers and concerns relating to costs and access.

Competitive Pathway & Performance

- At the 2024 Paris Olympic Games, Welsh swimmers won three medals in the pool (2 gold, 1 silver), which equated to 20% of the medals won by Team GB swimmers (despite making up 10% of the British team).
- Welsh athletes have consistently delivered world-class performances on the international stage in recent years (Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, World Championships & European Championships). However, this year has seen a 10% reduction in funding to the Swim Wales High Performance Programme, on top of redirected funding away from sport science.

2. What measures have you taken in light of it, such as changing what you do and how you do it?

Swim Wales has taken several measures to guard against reduced funding and enable our national partners to offer aquatic opportunities to the Welsh public.

Increased Partnerships

Swim Wales has placed a greater emphasis on partnerships in recent years to combat the effect of reduced funding into Swim Wales and wider aquatics.

Swansea University

- Swim Wales & Swansea University agreed a partnership in 2023 with the goal of to creating programs and pathways across the aquatic landscape, from supporting the world-class performance environment at Wales National Pool Swansea, to exploring collaboration opportunities that will allow us to push the boundaries of knowledge and innovation in our sports (Data, insight, placements and interns)
- Swansea University and Swim Wales have introduced PhD placements and opportunities in sports science and other areas with success.

Cardiff Met University & Cardiff Council

- Only 16% of children in Cardiff can swim, the lowest figures for any local authority in Wales, according to the latest data collected by Cardiff Metropolitan University and Swim Wales.
- Cardiff has one of the lowest levels of participation in swimming lessons in primary schools across all of Wales. Only 57% of primary schools in Cardiff in the academic year 2022/23 sent pupils to swimming lessons.
- In response to the figures, a group of organizations have joined together to tackle the low swimming participation figures in Cardiff, including Cardiff Metropolitan University, Cardiff Met Sport, Swim Wales, Feathers Association, Sport Wales, Public Health Wales, GLL, Legacy Leisure, the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Cardiff Council and the Urdd. The partnership aims to raise awareness about the importance of making school swimming and water safety education a standard practice in Cardiff schools.
- The group suggests that the primary method to ensuring every child acquires essential swimming skills is through the implementation of annual School Swimming Lessons in all schools - with a new model proposed to facilitate this.

Other National Partners

- Swim Wales has partnered with national providers including Freedom Leisure, Parkwood Leisure and Byw'n Iach to ensure learners across Wales are receiving the best quality learn to swim experience.

Health

- Aquatics & Health are intrinsically linked, with aquatic activity proven to increase mental and physical wellbeing.

- Swim Wales partnered with GoodBoost, a social enterprise that provides affordable and accessible therapeutic exercise programmes, through cutting-edge technology. The implementation of GoodBoost at Welsh leisure centres has been proven to boost recovery times, and ease the burden on the NHS through prehabilitation and rehabilitation.

Development Fund

- Thanks to Welsh Government & Sport Wales funding, Swim Wales launched the Swim Wales Aquatic Development Fund to help our member clubs become more sustainable and attractive to new and current members.

Cynnwys

- Swim Wales recently launched our Cynnwys DEI framework with the aim of making Welsh aquatics a safe, welcoming, inclusive and accessible space for all.
- A key project within Cynnwys will include a learning series to help educate partners on making aquatics accessible to every member of our communities.

Ein Clwb

- To ease the burden on Swim Wales member clubs, Swim Wales created Ein Clwb (Our Club) a bank of resources to help with the smooth running of an aquatic club.

3. To what extent will these impacts be irreversible (e.g. venues closing, or specialist skills being lost rather than a temporary restriction in activities)?

There have already been a number of irreversible effects of reduced funding across aquatics in Wales, including leisure centre closures, which will inevitably lead to a lost generation of learners and ultimately a higher risk of drowning fatalities.

Harlech Leisure Centre Closure (several north Wales at risk)

- The closure of Harlech Leisure Centre is a stark example of the irreversible impacts of reduced funding. This closure not only represents

the loss of a vital community hub but also signifies the beginning of a broader trend where more leisure facilities could face a similar fate.

- These closures result in a permanent loss of access to swimming facilities, particularly in rural or economically disadvantaged areas where alternatives are limited or non-existent.
- Once a facility is closed, the cost of reopening or replacing it is often prohibitive, leading to a lasting reduction in community services. The risk of further closures across Wales threatens to dismantle the infrastructure needed to provide essential aquatic education and activities.
- Swim Wales estimates that 30% or up to 150 swimming pools are at risk of closure over the next 10 years if action is not taken by central and local governments.

Lost Generation of Learners

- The reduction in funding has already led to a significant decline in the number of children participating in school swimming programs. With only 41% of children in Years 3-6 able to swim 25 meters unaided as of the 2022/23 academic year, we are at risk of creating a "lost generation" of learners who are not equipped with the necessary skills to be safe in, on, or around water.
- If the current trend continues, over 21,000 children could leave primary school each year without achieving basic water competence.
- This generational gap in swimming education will have long-term consequences, not only for the individuals affected but also for public safety and health.
- The loss of early swimming education can lead to a decline in overall water safety knowledge, increasing the likelihood of water-related accidents and fatalities in the future

Ultimate Health and Safety Risk

- The ultimate and most serious consequence of reduced funding is the heightened health and safety risk. Drowning remains the second most common cause of non-intentional injury fatalities among children under 18 in Wales.

- Without adequate swimming competency and water safety education, the risk of drowning incidents could rise.
- The presence of drugs or alcohol in nearly half of the fatalities in the 18-24 age group underscores the importance of early and continuous water safety education, which could mitigate such risks.
- The lack of access to swimming facilities and education exacerbates health inequalities, disproportionately affecting those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and ethnic minorities who already face barriers to participation.
- The irreversible impact here is not just the loss of a skill but the potential for an increase in preventable deaths.

In summary, the impacts of reduced funding on Swim Wales and the aquatic sector are not only severe but also likely to be lasting. The closure of key facilities, the creation of a lost generation of non-swimmers, and the increased health and safety risks highlight the critical need for sustained investment and support to prevent these irreversible outcomes.

4. What interventions would you like to see from the Welsh Government, beyond increased funding?

To ensure the sustainability of aquatic facilities and programmes across Wales, Swim Wales advocates for several key interventions from the Welsh Government beyond merely increasing funding;

Protected Status for Swimming Pools & Leisure Centers

- One crucial intervention would be to grant aquatic facilities protected status, similar to how libraries are treated. This status would recognise swimming pools and leisure centres as essential community assets, safeguarding them from closure due to financial pressures. By ensuring that these facilities are legally protected, the Welsh Government would be acknowledging their vital role not just in promoting physical activity but also in providing life-saving education through swimming lessons and water safety programmes.
- Given that these facilities are often the only local resources available for learning to swim, especially in rural or disadvantaged areas, this intervention would help prevent the irreversible loss of essential services.

- The closure of such facilities would have a profound and lasting impact on public health and safety, particularly for future generations who would be deprived of the opportunity to develop essential life skills.

Aquatics in broader health strategies

- Swim Wales strongly believes that the scope of aquatic activities extends far beyond the realm of sport, encompassing significant public health benefits. Therefore, we urge the Welsh Government to integrate aquatics into broader health and wellbeing strategies.
- An integrated approach would involve recognizing swimming and other aquatic activities as key components of preventative healthcare, with direct benefits for mental and physical health. For example, swimming has been shown to improve cardiovascular health, reduce stress, and offer therapeutic benefits for individuals with chronic conditions such as arthritis.
- By positioning aquatics as a vital part of the healthcare system, the Welsh Government could facilitate cross-departmental collaboration, ensuring that public health initiatives include and promote access to swimming and water-based activities.
- This could be achieved through partnerships between health services, local authorities, and leisure providers, ensuring that aquatic programmes are supported not just as sports activities but as essential health services. This broader recognition would also help secure funding and resources from health budgets, further protecting and promoting access to aquatic activities.

Safeguarding School Swimming

- Another essential intervention is the safeguarding and promotion of school swimming as a core component of the curriculum. The Welsh Government should ensure that every child has the opportunity to learn to swim and develop water safety skills during their primary school years.
- This could be achieved by reinstating a clear mandate within the Curriculum for Wales, ensuring that swimming and water safety education are prioritised across all schools.

- Currently, there is significant variation in the availability of school swimming across different local authorities, with some areas, such as Merthyr Tydfil, having no schools participating in swimming programmes. This disparity puts many children at risk, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds who may not have access to private lessons.
- By making school swimming a non-negotiable part of the educational experience, the Welsh Government would help to level the playing field, ensuring that all children, regardless of their socioeconomic status, have the opportunity to learn this critical life skill.
- Additionally, targeted support and resources should be provided to schools and local authorities to overcome logistical challenges, such as transportation and scheduling, which currently hinder access to swimming lessons. Promoting school swimming not only contributes to a healthier, more active population but also significantly reduces the risk of drowning incidents in the future.

5. To what extent do the impacts you describe fall differently on people with protected characteristics and people of a lower socioeconomic status?

Attempts by the national governing body and its national partners to increase accessibility in diverse and underserved communities have been met with barriers and concerns relating to costs and access. Affordability is a huge issue currently with the cost of entry not only to swimming lessons but general leisure services and swimming sessions prohibitive in many cases. This is directly related to reduced funding from within local government budgets compounded by the many of these pressures from increased costs.

6. Do you have any other points you wish to raise within the scope of this inquiry?

These points and others similar have been raised now by myself in 3 separate WG committees since COVID. There has not been much interest or movement of the back of these and as the Vice Chair of Welsh Sport Association I (and many others) fear that the requests for evidence and the good will in sports organizations is waning. I hope that this time the evidence and discussion is acted upon

Jane Richardson
Chief Executive
Amgueddfa Cymru

14 October 2024

Inquiry on the impact of funding reductions for culture and sport

Dear Jane,

I understand that you are unable to accept the Committee's invitation to provide evidence in person for our inquiry on funding reductions due to your existing commitments. Whilst the Committee is disappointed not to hear from you directly, we do understand the reasons and would like to invite you to submit written evidence to inform our deliberations.

In particular, the Committee would be grateful if you could address the following:

- Can you outline the impact of the cuts in the 2024-25 Budget on Amgueddfa Cymru and how they were implemented?
- How is the additional in-year grant-in-aid funding allocated by the Welsh Government to Amgueddfa Cymru being spent, and how is it mitigating the impact of funding reductions?
- How have you used the additional in-year capital funding to mitigate the risks to the national collections? How is the Welsh Government working with Amgueddfa Cymru to protect the Cardiff site over the longer term?
- What is Amgueddfa Cymru's contribution to the Welsh Government's National Contemporary Art Gallery project? What funding has the Welsh Government committed to providing Amgueddfa Cymru to support their contribution to the project post-March 2025?

- The Welsh Government has committed to investing in Amgueddfa Cymru's Llanberis site. Can you outline the funding commitments the Welsh Government has made, and how these fit with your plans for the site?
- Can you outline aspects of Amgueddfa Cymru's activity that you see as examples of preventative spending?

As the Committee's inquiry is drawing to a close, it would be helpful to receive any submission you would like to make by midday on Friday, 18 October 2024.

We look forward to receiving your evidence.

Yours sincerely,



Delyth Jewell MS
Committee Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

14 October 2024

Delyth Jewell
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Dear Ms Jewell,

Publishing in Wales

I am writing to you as a leading book publisher in Wales and a founding director of Cyhoeddi Cymru | Publishing Wales, the association of publishers in Wales, to bring your attention to the serious situation in the Welsh publishing industry and to ask for your support in addressing this matter.

The Welsh publishing sector is led brilliantly by the Books Council of Wales but sadly, in 2024/25, they saw a cut in their annual budget by 10.5%. This was a particularly devastating blow, as other major Welsh language organisations saw no cuts to their annual budget, in many cases, they saw their funding increase.

Since 2009/10, the Books Council of Wales's annual budget has almost halved in real terms (it now represents just 52.1% of what it was in 2009/10). These cuts have been against a hard economic backdrop where raw materials and supply chain products have constantly increased and then combined with a cost-of-living crisis choking demand to create a 'perfect storm' of crisis in the sector.

The long period of austerity has meant schools struggle to afford books and libraries have closed – both of which were once significant markets for publishers. Against this difficult background, Government support for the publishing sector in Wales, and particularly for the Welsh publishing sector, is needed more than it has ever been before.

Currently, the Books Council of Wales has an annual budget of £1.5 million per annum. Some of this is spent on their staff and overheads, but much of this amount is passed on to publishers as grants. Therefore, I am respectfully requesting that this budget is **NOT CUT** further. In addition, I am asking you to consider investing a further £1.4 million per annum to restore the real value of their funding to 2009/10 level at £2.9 million. The reasons for this request are outlined as follows.

Well-being and mental health

The core purpose of the grants administered by the Books Council of Wales to the publishing industry is to create books that encourage '*Reading for Pleasure*'. Reading is a superpower and a foundational block for our society. If you can read, then you function more productively and contribute to our nation as well as being empowered to be more able to 'help yourself' in times of need.

As such, books and by extension, the publishing sector in Wales is vital to supporting the health and well-being of our nation.

Economy and Jobs

My company employs ten people across South Wales from Llanelli and Cardiff. In many rural and South Wales areas, it is extremely difficult to find professional jobs with good salaries that offer the opportunity to provide a creative outlet, offer a good income, and enable them to support their families.

As well as our employed jobs, we work with over 100 freelancers varying from artists, authors, illustrators, translators, creative editors, copy editors and software developers, animators and many others who rely on our commissions.

The benefits of online and remote working have enabled us to provide work to freelancers in more rural areas; but all of this is dependent on the support we receive from Welsh Government through the Books Council. Without this support – especially given the economic challenges I've noted above – these jobs and benefits would not exist. Our books are sold in many small, independent, bookshops all over Wales and these small businesses are often the core of communities – bringing people together and supporting the local economy. Many of our books are sold throughout the UK and Ireland. Graffeg sell rights to our books throughout the world: USA and Canada, China, Japan, France Italy, Germany, Romania, Turkey, Albania, Sweden and Denmark.

As this shows, the reach of the small amount of funding we have is extensive. It stimulates the creative industries in Wales and produces earnings from international markets.

No more cuts.

The Books Council of Wales's funding should be 'ring fenced' in 2025/26 and in future years, in a similar way to those Welsh organisations that are in the '**Culture**' portfolio.

Although publishing sits in the 'Creative Industries' portfolio, we provide vital Welsh language resources for both children and adults. We strongly believe that our provision should be treated uniquely as a matter of importance not only to safeguard our culture and heritage, but also for the economic reasons detailed above. Please do not impose any further cuts on our small grants. We simply will not be able to continue to operate.

Reading for pleasure is a campaign that the UK publishing industry is urging the UK government to embrace and to offer more financial support. Publishers at the Bookseller's recent Children's Conference called on the Prime Minister to "**make a cross-government commitment to prioritise the role of reading for pleasure for children**. *This would be an investment in the well-being, social mobility and life chances of our children and the prosperity and success of the UK*".

However, in Wales, we have already identified the importance of '**reading for pleasure**' by making this the core driver of The Books Council of Wales. Sadly, since 2009/10, the real value of their funding, including the grant support they pass on to the Welsh publishing industry has almost halved in real terms. This has meant that so much of the excellent work they were able to do to promote the language and invest in skills has fallen by the wayside – to the detriment of both the language and the industry.

We therefore implore you to **invest now in this foundational industry and in our language by reinstate the real value of their funding**. The real value of The Books Council of Wales funding in 2009/10 is now £2.9 million in real terms. Funding at this level

would help us secure the future of publishing in Wales and turn back the tide of decline over recent years and allow publishing to grow.

The Books Council of Wales current budget is £1.5 million - the additional £1.4 million required to restore the real value of the grant will provide excellent value for money. The funds would sustain jobs in publishing in Wales as well as 100's if not 1000's of freelance workers.

The sustainable funding would also create important new publishing products, in print, digital and audio books, and support well-being and mental health, the economy, rural communities, literacy, education, the Welsh language and support the government's commitment to achieving the 1 Million Welsh Speakers by 2050.

Please ask yourself what other industry could provide as much benefit for such a relatively small investment?

Our priority is to **prevent any further cuts**, but fundamentally, our industry is heading towards a tipping point, and **restorative investment** would empower our industry and would support many of the goals of the Government.

Please invest now to preserve and kickstart our industry and give hope to the many people who work for us and desperately need to see change put into action.

Yours Sincerely,

Peter Gill FCSO FRSA
Managing Director Graffeg Limited
Director Cyhoeddi Cymru | Publishing Wales.
peter.gill@graffeg.com



Firefly Press
25 Gabalfa Road
Llandaff North
Cardiff CF14 2JJ

16 October 24

To:

Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership
Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language
Cabinet Secretary for Education
Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning
Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing
Minister for Children and Social Care

Members of the Culture Committee

Members representing South Wales Central and South Wales East and Caerphilly – Firefly Press areas

As well as a copy to the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and Internal Relations Committee

Dear Ministers and Senedd Member,

I'm writing to you as the Co-founder and Publisher at the award-winning Firefly Press to put the case for restorative funding for Wales-based publishers, who are facing a critical funding situation.

Firefly Press publishes quality fiction for children and young adults in English and Welsh. It was founded in Cardiff and Aberystwyth in 2013 and now employs seven staff at its office in Caerphilly, and provides work for freelancers across Wales. We were awarded Wales Small Press of the Year at the British Book Awards in 2020, 2021, 2023 and 2024, winning the prestigious Yoto Carnegie Medal for children's writing last year.

I'd like to draw your attention to the following: the grant to publishers through the Welsh Books Council, from which Firefly receives vital support, sustained a deep 10.5% last year, bringing the total cut in the last ten years to 17%. This in an industry that produces top quality books from Wales on a shoestring and had previously been on standstill funding for a decade or more.

Since 2010/11, the Books Council of Wales's annual budget, which supports Welsh and English language publishers in Wales has almost halved in real terms (it now represents just 52.1% of what it was then). Given the rapid rise in costs of raw materials, especially paper due to the energy price rises, and the cost-of-living crisis, combined with the closure of many school and community libraries, the effect of this on authors, illustrators, staff marketing and production budgets has been dramatic.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

As above, last year we achieved the highest accolade in children's and YA publishing by winning the Yoto Carnegie Medal with *The Blue Book of Nebo* by Manon Steffan Ros, first published as *Llyfyr Glas Nebo* by Y Lolfa in 2019. This award received national media attention as the first translated book ever to win the Medal. The success of a micropublisher from South Wales at the premier event of the children's and YA publishing calendar at the Barbican in London, was a wonderful testament to the effectiveness of small grants to small publishers in both languages which make such a huge difference.

At a time when the PISA figures for child literacy are of concern, the importance of a Wales-based children's literature, where children and adults can see themselves reflected in books, and find stories from their own country cannot be under-estimated. Research by organisations such as the National Literacy Trust and Book Trust has shown that literacy and reading for pleasure promote positive mental health and wellbeing, empathy, cultural understanding and, impressively, a child's life chances. **'Reading for Pleasure is the single most important indicator of a child's future success. There is a verified link between reading and escaping poverty.'** Scottish Book Trust.

Firefly has also been instrumental in reaching out to new audiences and bringing books from Wales, and author visits, into to Welsh schools. We have had books selected for the New Audiences Fund, Caru Darllen Schools Love Reading, the Reading Agency's Reading Well Scheme, the Summer Reading Challenge, EmpathyLab, the Book Trust Book Buzz and Letterbox programmes and the Rhyngom project.

As well as the above, Welsh Government support for export trade fairs in London and Frankfurt, also makes a significant difference to our ability to bring books both to children in Wales, and from Wales to the world, and it has been a pleasure to represent Welsh children's publishing this week, with an export deal signed for Australia already. But without a restoration of the small but very significant key funding which underpins the industry, we are not going to be in a position to take advantage of such schemes in the future, and bring in the economic, educational, wellbeing and cultural benefits that we aspire to achieve for our readers and for Wales.

Currently, The Books Council of Wales' annual budget is £1.5 million per annum. Much of this is passed on to publishers as grants, which is a vital support system. **We are therefore requesting that rather than seeing this budget cut further, you consider investing a further £1.4 million per annum to restore the real value of their grant back to the 20010/11 levels.**

Thank you so much for your kind attention. I also attach our most recent catalogue for your information.

All the very best

Penny
Penny Thomas
Publisher
Firefly Press Ltd







From the fantastic to the fantastical, Firefly is delighted to bring you its sumptuous 2024 catalogue with more books and stories this year than ever before!

Here the fiery golden flame birds of **Flame Chasers** (Julie Pike) mingle with some seriously demanding cats in the fog-draped world of **Starspill** (Catherine Fisher). And all manner of mythical creatures spring from the pages of **Welsh Giants, Ghosts and Goblins** (Claire Fayers) this autumn.

For those who love a properly spooky story, **The Doll Twin** by Janine Beacham is a must for April. And don't miss the creepy paranormal shenanigans in the second book of the Delores Mackenzie series, **The Haunted Life of Delores Mackenzie** (Yvonne Banham) in Edinburgh later in the year!

Young adult readers get more than their fair share of chills in twisty, *Traitor-esque* thriller **Lie or Die** from A. J. Clack this spring, followed by a stunning Indian myth-based romantasy debut **This Dark Heart** from Zeena Gosrani in the autumn.

For younger readers, Michael the sausage dog of Blue Peter Book Club fame returns with a laugh-out-loud Hollywoof adventure in **Michael the Incredible Super-Sleuth Sausage Dog** (Terrie Chilvers and Tim Budgen), while the ticklish among you may twitch as you join the SPUD detectives for the third in the acclaimed **Major and Mynah** series – **Tarantula Terror** (Karen Owen and Louise Forshaw)!

Football lovers have plenty of middle-grade fiction to enjoy this year, with **Me and Aaron Ramsey** from Yoto Carnegie Medal Winner Manon Steffan Ros highlighting the relationship of a football-mad father and son, while hard-hitting **Raz Beri** by Matt Stephens tells the story of two 13-year-olds with cerebral palsy, as they also encounter their footballing heroes.

We have poetry too, with a third, funny and thoughtful collection from Wales Children's Laureate Alex Wharton – **Red Sky at Night; Poets' Delight**, illustrated by Ian Morris, and a middle-grade anthology of poems from across Wales, **And I Hear Dragons**, edited by Wales Poet Laureate Hanan Issa, with illustrations by Eric Heyman publishing in English, Welsh and bilingually at the end of May.

Add to this **A History of My Weird** (Chloë Heuch) – which sees autistic student Mo, navigating the transition to secondary school while she and new friend Onyx investigate their town's murky past – and we hope you'll find a whole bookshelf full of stories you'll love to read in 2024!

PENNY THOMAS, PUBLISHER

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Major and Mynah: Tarantula Terror

Karen Owen



Major and Mynah

BOOK ONE

PB | £6.99

ISBN 9781913102746



Major and Mynah

BOOK TWO

PB | £6.99

ISBN 9781915444035



SPUD – the Super Perceptive Undercover Detectives are back and they have another mystery to solve. When Callie, Grace and Bo discover that a tarantula has escaped from the wildlife park, they must find the spider and reunite her with her spiderlings, before she dies from the cold. Can Callie’s magical hearing aids and mynah bird Bo – the SPUD team’s Spy in the Sky – help to find the missing creature before it’s too late?

The **THIRD** hilarious instalment in the Major and Mynah series.

15th February 2024 | Paperback | 128pp | £6.99

ISBN 9781915444431



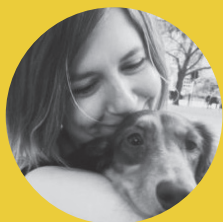
Karen Owen fell in love with books and stories at a young age. When she couldn't read, she daydreamed – so it was only natural that when she grew up she should spend her days reading, writing and daydreaming for a living. Karen has been a journalist, a creative writing teacher, and an author. [@AuthorKarenOwen](#)

Louise Forshaw lives near Newcastle upon Tyne with her fiancé and three noisy Jack Russell terriers. To date, Louise has illustrated over seventy children's books. [@Munkey_Pants](#)





Pack Page 59



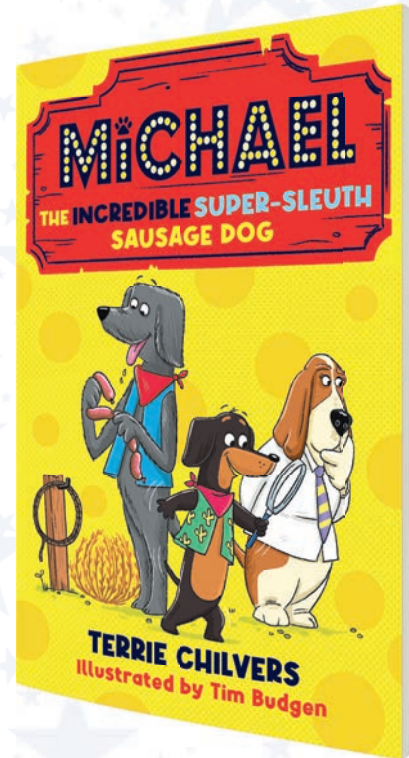
Terrie Chilvers writes funny middle-grade fiction and non-fiction. She works freelance as a copywriter and social media consultant but is most happy when teaching a dog to high-five. Terrie lives in London where she is the doting aunt to two long-haired sausage dogs. [@cowfishdreams](#)

Tim Budgen is a freelance illustrator. For much of his life he has been scribbling down ideas and can usually be found with a pencil in one hand and a sketchbook in the other! His illustration work has been described as 'story telling with whimsical charm, warmth and humour' and he'd like to think that is pretty true! [@mrtimdraws](#)



Michael the Incredible Super-sleuth Sausage Dog

Terrie Chilvers



Michael the Amazing, Mind-reading Sausage Dog
BOOK ONE
PB | £6.99
ISBN 9781915444134
Selected for the Blue Peter Book Club

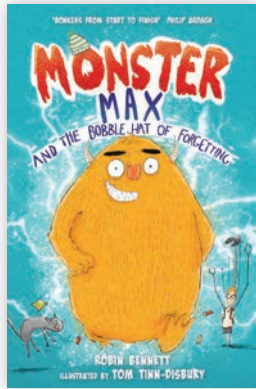


Being a su-paw-star isn't working out quite like Michael had planned. So when Susan the Chocolate Labrador gets dognapped, Michael jumps at the chance to boost his TV ratings and wow his fans by becoming not just a mind-reading sausage dog, but a detective mastermind as well ... oh, and he should probably try and save Susan from her dognappers too.

SECOND in the series.

2nd May 2024 | Paperback | 176pp | £6.99
ISBN 9781915444516

Monster Max and the Bobble Hat of Forgetting BOOK ONE



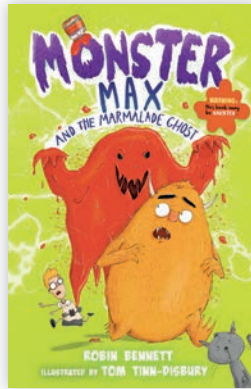
ROBIN BENNETT

PB | £6.99

ISBN 9781913102333

Illus. Tom Tinn-Disbury

Monster Max and the Marmalade Ghost BOOK TWO



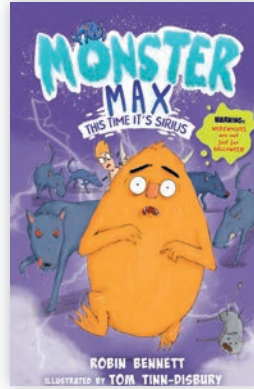
ROBIN BENNETT

PB | £6.99

ISBN 9781913102821

Illus. Tom Tinn-Disbury

Monster Max: This Time It's Sirius BOOK THREE



ROBIN BENNETT

PB | £6.99

ISBN 9781915444271

Illus. Tom Tinn-Disbury

Grace-Ella: Spells for Beginners BOOK ONE



SHARON MARIE JONES

PB | £5.99

ISBN 9781910080429

Illus. Adriana J. Puglisi

Grace-Ella: Witch Camp BOOK TWO



SHARON MARIE JONES

PB | £5.99

ISBN 9781913102067

Illus. Adriana J. Puglisi

Grace-Ella: Pixie Pandemonium BOOK THREE



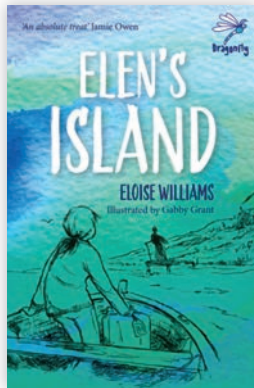
SHARON MARIE JONES

PB | £5.99

ISBN 9781913102623

Illus. Adriana J. Puglisi

Elen's Island

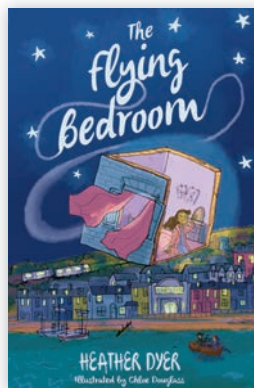


ELOISE WILLIAMS

PB | £5.99

ISBN 9781910080207

The Flying Bedroom



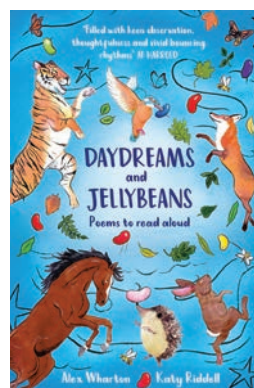
HEATHER DYER

PB | £5.99

ISBN 9781910080023

Illus. Chloe Douglass

Daydreams and Jellybeans



ALEX WHARTON

PB | £6.99

ISBN 9781913102432

Illus. Katy Riddell

Thimble Monkey Superstar BOOK ONE



JON BLAKE

PB | £6.99

ISBN 9781910080344

Illus. Martin Chatterton

Thimble Holiday Havoc BOOK TWO



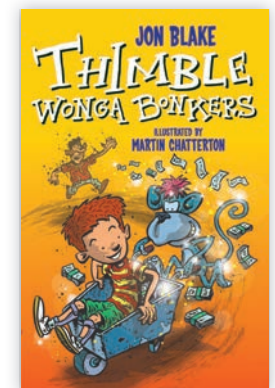
JON BLAKE

PB | £5.99

ISBN 9781910080665

Illus. Martin Chatterton

Thimble Wonga Bonkers BOOK THREE



JON BLAKE

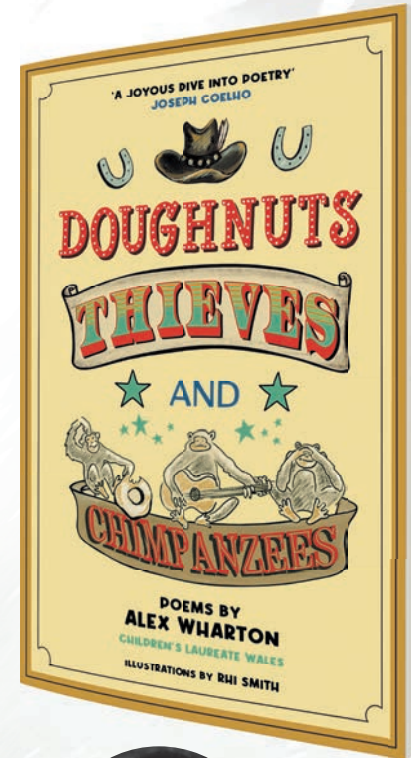
PB | £5.99

ISBN 9781913102104

Illus. Martin Chatterton

Doughnuts, Thieves and Chimpanzees

Alex Wharton



'A joyous dive into poetry'
Joseph Coelho



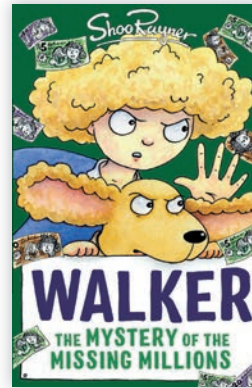
An innovative poetry 'how to' collection aimed at school pupils, *Doughnuts, Thieves and Chimpanzees*, is packed full of fun poems, limericks, haiku, song and rap from Children's Laureate Wales Alex Wharton, illustrated by Rhiannon Smith.

17th October 2023 | Paperback | £6.99

ISBN 9781915444585

Walker: The Mystery of the Missing Millions

BOOK TWO



SHOO RAYNER

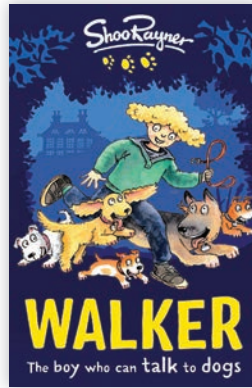
PB | £6.99

ISBN 9781913102531

Illus. Shoo Rayner

Walker: the boy who can talk to dogs

BOOK ONE



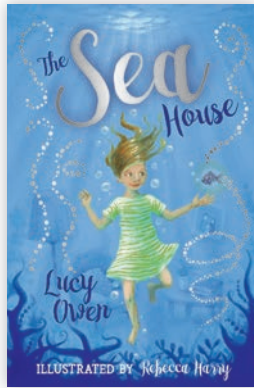
SHOO RAYNER

PB | £6.99

ISBN 9781910080900

Illus. Shoo Rayner

The Sea House



LUCY OWEN

PB | £6.99

ISBN 9781910080825

Illus. Rebecca Harry

Dragon Red

BOOK THREE



SHOO RAYNER

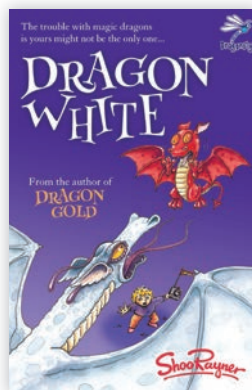
PB | £5.99

ISBN 9781910080481

Illus. Shoo Rayner

Dragon White

BOOK TWO



SHOO RAYNER

PB | £6.99

ISBN 9781910080306

Illus. Shoo Rayner

Dragon Gold

BOOK ONE



SHOO RAYNER

PB | £5.99

ISBN 9781910080047

Illus. Shoo Rayner

Red Sky at Night, Poet's Delight

Alex Wharton



'His poems chime and sing from the page.'

A. F. Harrold

Pack Page 62

From Children's Laureate Wales Alex Wharton comes *Red Sky at Night, Poet's Delight* – a third collection of funny and thoughtful poems, aimed at developing a love of language and self-expression and perfect for reading aloud or in class.

Readers will be excited by fun new characters like Mr Slime and the return of Hector the Horrible Hedgehog from *Daydreams and Jellybeans*, as well as being introduced to powerful and moving poems such as 'Young Oak', 'The Long Way Home', and 'For a Quiet Day'.

1st February 2024 | Paperback | 64pp | £6.99

ISBN 9781915444356



Alex Wharton is an award-winning writer and performer of poetry for adults and children. His first book of poetry for children, *Daydreams and Jellybeans*, was shortlisted for the Wales Book of The Year Award 2022, The North Somerset Teacher's Book Awards, The Laugh Out Loud Book Awards and was named as a National Poetry Day Recommended Read. He is a regular performer at school events, and has worked with many key organisations to promote literacy and poetry, as well as appearing in festivals such as Hay Festival and Edinburgh International Book Festival. [@alexwhartonpoet](https://twitter.com/alexwhartonpoet)

Ian Morris is a passionate illustrator with an authentic voice and is a lecturer at Manchester School Of Art on the Illustration with Animation course. Ian's debut picture book *The Library Book* was longlisted for the Klaus Flugge Prize 2022 and nominated for the Yoto Carnegie Illustration Medal 2023. [@IanMorris_22](https://twitter.com/IanMorris_22)

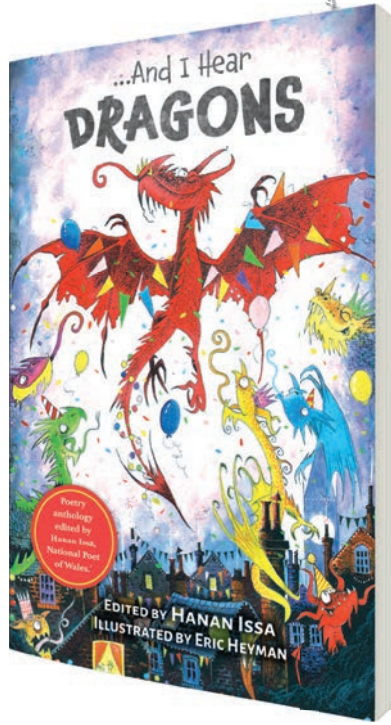


Poetry

Red Sky at Night, Poet's Delight | Alex Wharton | Ian Morris

And I Hear Dragons

Hanan Issa Ed.



Pack Page 63

Dragons are everywhere in this ground-breaking anthology: in the bath, the back garden, in your pocket, your family, or a part of the landscape itself.

Conceived and edited by the National Poet of Wales, Hanan Issa, *And I Hear Dragons* explores the concepts of identity and belonging, and the title poem celebrates the children of Wales as ferociously brave mythical beasts, taking on discrimination, pollution and more, and upholding Wales' tradition of croesawgar (welcoming). Featuring twenty or more poets from communities across Wales, including Alex Wharton, Cafi Wyn, Ifor ap Glyn and Sarah Ziman, this is a refreshing and energetic collection, perfect for use in schools and reading for pleasure, and will be available in English, Welsh, and bilingually.

.....
30th May 2024 | Paperback | £7.99
ISBN 9781915444578
.....

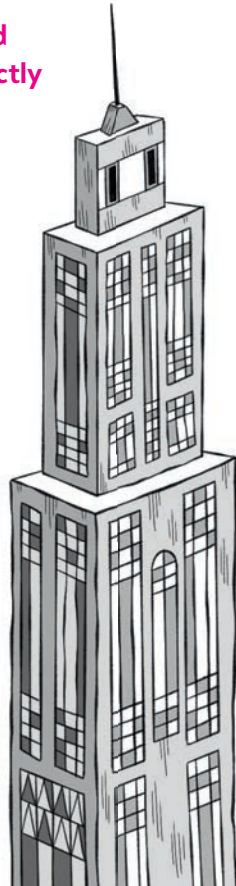


Hanan Issa is a writer, poet and artist, as well as the co-founder of the Where I'm Coming From open mic collective, whose debut pamphlet *My Body Can House Two Hearts* was published by Burning Eye Books. Her work has been performed and published on platforms such as BBC Wales, ITV Wales, Huffington Post, Stanza Festival, *Poetry Wales*, Wales Arts International and the British Council.

'A fantastic blend of intrigue and adventure that's perfectly pitched for young readers who love sleuthing.'
Andy Shepherd



'Joyful, fun and brilliantly plotted! Perfect for young armchair detectives everywhere.'
A.M. Howell



Pack Page 64

Libby and the Manhattan Mystery

Jo Clarke



Libby and the Parisian Puzzle
BOOK ONE
PB | £7.99
ISBN 9781913102708



Libby and the Highland Heist
BOOK TWO
PB | £7.99
ISBN 9781915444011

'Another delightful page-turner from the queen of cosy crime for kids!'
Rashmi Sirdeshpande

The travelling school arrives in New York, and Libby and her friends find themselves organising a charity auction alongside Hollywood star Eloise Fitzwilliam. But something isn't right. Why is Eloise's friend Count Alvarez acting so strangely, and can a face from the past really have followed the school all the way to New York?

THIRD in the series.

4th January 2024 | Paperback | 224pp | £7.99
ISBN 9781915444394



Jo Clarke is an award-winning book blogger and primary school librarian. Her hugely successful blog, BookloverJo, keeps her active in the children's book community and she has been involved in judging the British Book Awards and the Alligator's Mouth Book Awards.

@bookloverjo

Becca Moor is a children's book illustrator living in Manchester. She studied at Glyndŵr University, graduating in 2012. Since then, she has worked on a variety of young fiction, non-fiction and picture books. **@beckamoor**





The Doll Twin
JANINE BEACHAM
 MG | PB | £7.99
 ISBN 9781915444479
 Cover: Nathan Collins

Una Wexford is thrilled to be adopted after the Great War, but an eerie secret lurks in her new home: the doll twin, a life-sized, animated copy of herself. Is 'Ani' as innocent as she seems, or does she want to steal Una's life?



Janine Beacham has written all her life. A former journalist, she is the author of the Rose Raventhorpe Investigates series. When not writing, Janine works in a bookshop and occasionally gets to sign her own books. She lives in Australia with her family. *The Doll Twin* is Janine's first book with Firefly Press.

[@BeachamJanine](#)



Me and Aaron Ramsey
MANON STEFFAN ROS
 MG | PB | £7.99
 ISBN 9781915444493
 Cover: Cynthia Paul

Me and Aaron Ramsey tells the story of Sam and his dad who both love football, which is always there for them however tough real life becomes. That is, until Dad's dreams of football stardom go horribly wrong. Sam's love for the footballing legend becomes tangled with his relationship for his father as things go south in their family life.

ALSO BY MANON STEFFAN ROS

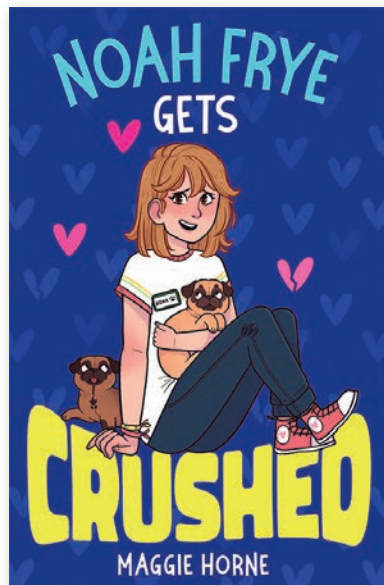
Winner of the Yoto
 Carnegie Medal 2023

The Blue Book of Nebo
 14+ | PB | £8.99
 ISBN 9781913102784
 Cover: Becka Moor



Manon Steffan Ros was born in Snowdonia and worked as an actress before becoming a writer. She writes for adults and children and won the Yoto Carnegie Medal last year with *The Blue Book of Nebo* (Firefly, 2022). She also won the Wales Book of the Year for her adult fiction as well as being four-times winner of the *Tir na n'Og* Welsh children's literature award. She has also won Eisteddfod and National Theatre Wales awards for her drama writing. She lives in north Wales with her sons.

[@ManonSteffanRos](#)



Noah Frye Gets Crushed

MAGGIE HORNE
 MG | PB | £7.99
 ISBN 9781915444530
 Cover: Luna Valentine

Best friends Luna and Zoey can't stop talking about boys and kissing, but Noah just wants everything to go back to the way it was. To fit in, Noah pretends that she likes Archie, a boy from school, even though she's not quite sure. When new girl Jessa joins their group things get even more confusing. Can Noah admit to herself who she really likes, not who she thinks she should?



Flame Chasers

JULIE PIKE
 MG | PB | £7.99
 ISBN 9781915444554
 Cover: David Dean

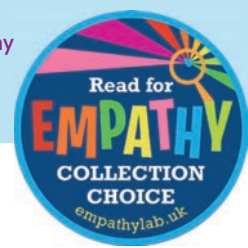
All Ember wants is to fly with the golden flamebirds who stop every year at Bright Beacon before heading west across the seas to their mysterious home. Their fiery arrival is also the signal for the waiting flame chasers in the harbour below to get ready to follow the birds, whose glowing tail feathers grant the finder a wish. But when Pa tells Ember he is chasing without her, she is devastated. Can she find a ship and captain to help her find her father, and the flamebirds secret home?



Pack Page 66

ALSO BY MAGGIE HORNE

A Read for Empathy
 2024 selection



Hazel Hill is Gonna Win This One
 PB | £7.99
 ISBN 9781913102975
 Cover: Luna Valentine



Maggie Horne is a writer who grew up near Toronto, Canada. She now lives in the UK with her wife, where they keep a collection of dogs and children. She is the author of books for middle grade and young adult readers. Her first novel, *Hazel Hill is Gonna Win This One*, was a 2023 LGBTQ+ Middle Grade Lambda Literary Award finalist and a Notable Children's Books in the Language Arts (NCTE) nominee.

[@MaggieHasHornes](#)



Julie Pike grew up on a council estate in Neath, nestled in the Welsh valleys. This inspired her debut novel *The Last Spellbreather* (OUP 2019), longlisted for the Waterstones Children's Book of the Year. Julie now lives in the Forest of Dean where she works as an environmental consultant.

[@Juliepike](#)



A History of My Weird

CHLOË HEUCH

MG | PB | £7.99

ISBN 9781915444639

Starting high school was never going to be easy for Mo, but a fall out with her so-called friends leaves her lonelier than ever. Then she finds Onyx. Exploring an abandoned Victorian asylum may seem a weird way to develop a friendship, but then Mo has always found she does things a bit differently. Together they help each other accept their own differences even when others struggle to do the same. Determined to keep the pair apart, Onyx's dad's actions force them back to the secrecy of Denham

asylum. On Halloween night, with the old building due for demolition, the two friends enter for the last time...

ALSO BY CHLOË HEUCH

Too Dark To See

YA | PB | £7.99

ISBN 9781913102166



Chloë Heuch is a neurodivergent author, writer and educator. In 2021 she was shortlisted for the Rhys Davies Short Story Competition and published by Parthian Press. Her YA debut novel *Too Dark to See* came out in 2020 with Firefly Press. She teaches English at Ysgol Friars secondary school in Bangor. She lives in North Wales with her family. When she's not reading and writing, she can be found wandering the mountains of North Wales with her cocker spaniel and her adventurous cat.

@clogsulike



Raz Beri

MATT STEPHENS

MG | PB | £7.99

ISBN 9781915444615

Billy has Cerebral Palsy and he's had enough of his classmates treating him differently. But then Mia arrives and announces a school visit from her uncle: a famous footballer. Maybe being a star footballer in front of his classmates will help Billy prove that he can be just like them. But when even his hero turns out to be just as bad as the school bullies, Billy begins to realise that perhaps he doesn't need to prove anything to anyone but himself.



Matt Stephens lives in Bristol. He derives joy and inspiration from his two daughters and three granddaughters. A turbulent past has been soothed by yoga, meditation and the realisation that human good outweighs human evil.

He writes for adults under the name Ed Trewavas and currently works in a major supermarket. Previous employment has included warehouse work, farm labouring and nursery/infant teaching. He enjoys cooking, sport (well, Bristol Rovers) and, most importantly, spending time with family and friends.



Welsh Giants, Ghosts, and Goblins

CLAIRE FAYERS

MG | HB | £10.99
ISBN 9781915444707

A wealth of Welsh myths, legends and ghost stories are reimagined for contemporary younger readers.

Meet Idris, the teenage giant king on a quest to collect stories. As he travels across Wales in this anthology, readers encounter a vengeful house goblin, a ghost that steals life from the living, dwarves that have moved in beneath someone's garden, a tea party of Lady ghosts, a furry trickster goblin and many other fascinating and devious fairy folk besides!



Starspill

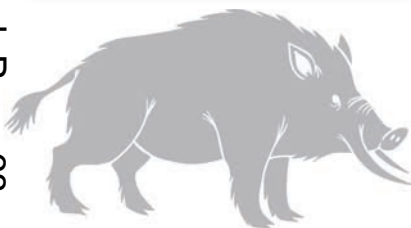
CATHERINE FISHER

MG | PB | £7.99
ISBN 9781915444684

It's been 140 years since the Wolf swallowed the Sun, so why are all the cats in the dark, fog-shrouded town of Starspill bothering Zac about it now? He just wants to stay warm, listen to stories, and work hard for his brother as an apprentice starsmith.

But the cats have other ideas. They want Zac to steal one of the three legendary Embers of the Sun from the town museum for them, and they've taken his precious secret map to make sure he'll agree!

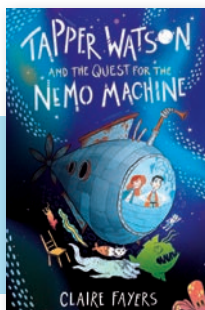
Pack Page 68



ALSO BY CLAIRE FAYERS

Tapper Watson and the Quest for the Nemo Machine

9-12 | PB | £7.99
ISBN 9781915444158
Cover: Becka Moor



Claire Fayers writes comic fantasy featuring swashbuckling pirates, evil magicians, heroic librarians and man-eating penguins. She grew up in south Wales, studied English in Canterbury, and is now back in Wales where she spends a lot of her free time tramping around castles in the rain, looking for dragons.

@ClaireFayers



The Clockwork Crow

8-12 | PB | £7.99
ISBN 9781910080849



The Velvet Fox

8-12 | PB | £7.99
ISBN 9781913102081



The Midnight Swan

8-12 | PB | £6.99
ISBN 9781913102371



The Red Gloves and Other Stories

9-12 | HB | £12.99
ISBN 9781913102685

ALSO BY CATHERINE FISHER



Catherine Fisher is a poet and children's author who lives in Newport, South Wales. A leading fantasy writer, her bestselling books include the Snow-Walker trilogy, the Oracle trilogy, the Incarceron series and the Chronoptika series. She was the first Wales Young People's Laureate.

@FisherAuthor



The Haunted Life of Delores Mackenzie

YVONNE BANHAM

7-9 | PB | £7.99

ISBN 9781915444660

Paranormal students Delores and Prudence are being hounded by inquisitors after they broke the rules and helped rescue fellow student Maud from death at the hands of an evil spirit.

Cruel inquisitor Magoria Jepp is searching for secrets at their home in Edinburgh's Tolbooth Bookstore, but does she have an uncanny history of her own to hide? As Delores tries save them both, she attracts the unwelcome attention of a murderous Boçain, or evil

spirit, intent on stealing her paranormal gifts. Can she defeat her enemies, and maybe her own family too, to save everyone she loves at the Tolbooth?

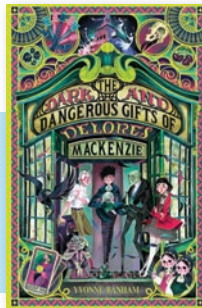
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Yvonne Banham has completed two years of study with the Golden Egg Academy and is one of the network organisers for SCBWI Scotland. She grew up on a small island off the Cumbrian coast and spent lots of time huddled on blustery beaches with a book or three.

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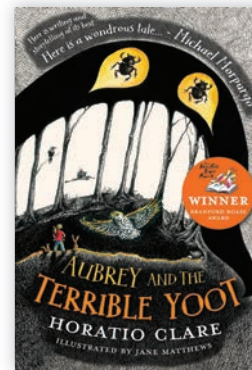
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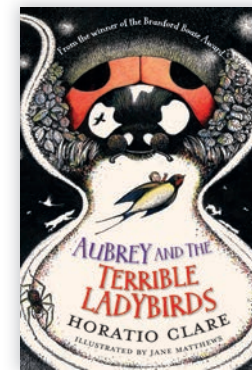
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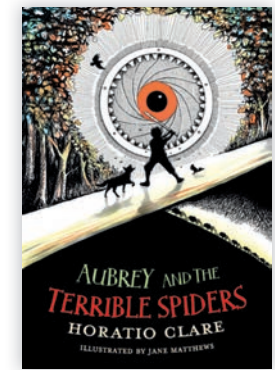
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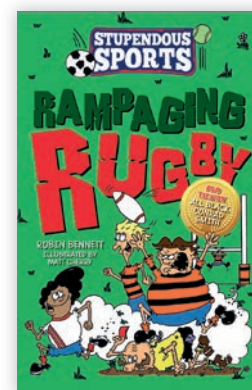
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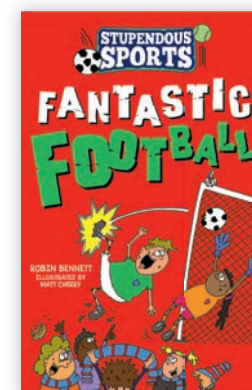
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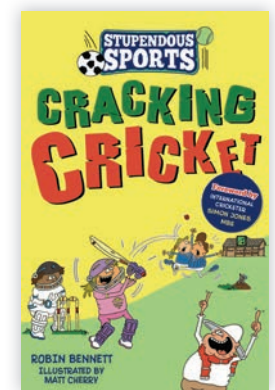
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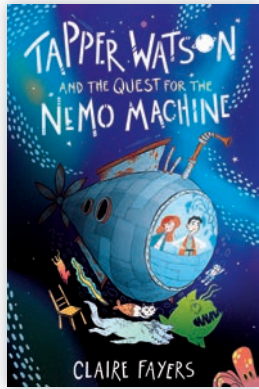
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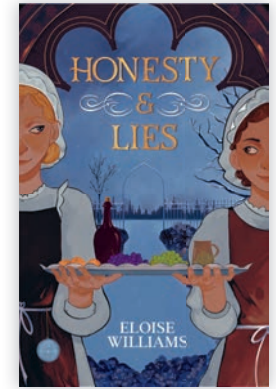
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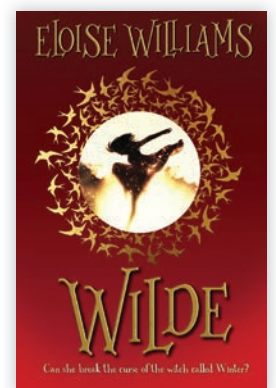
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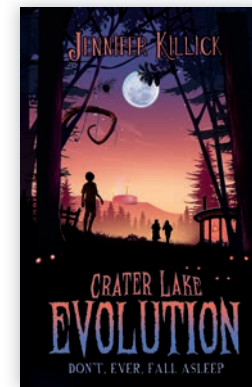


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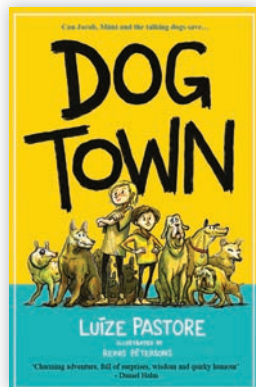


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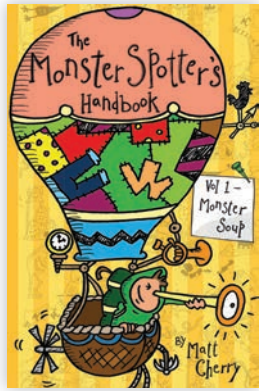
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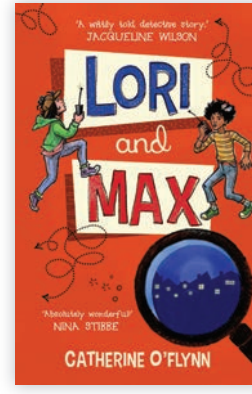
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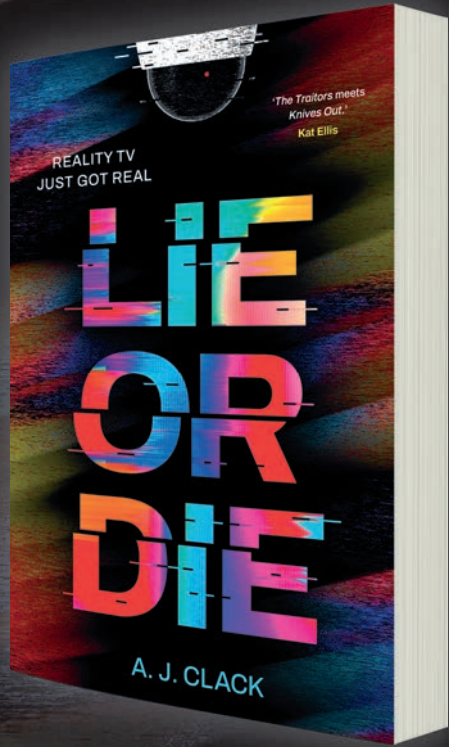
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Zeena Gosrani is a writer and pharmacist based in London. She was the winner of the The Bent Agency Scholarship to the SCBWI conference in 2019, proving that her dyslexia hasn't held her back. *This Dark Heart* is her debut novel.

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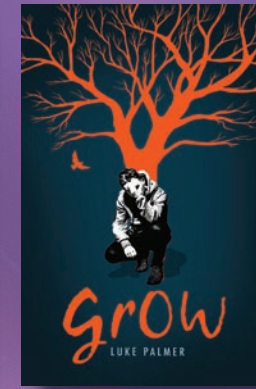
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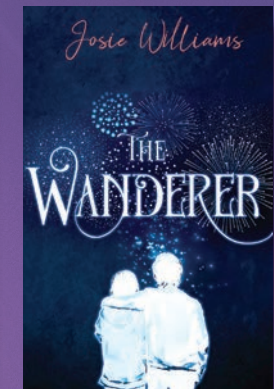
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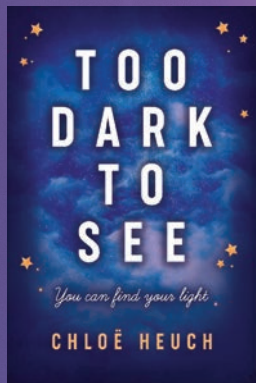
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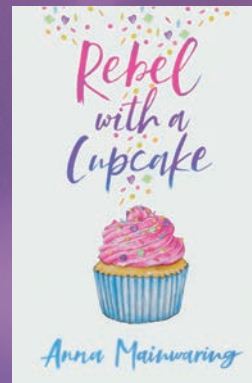
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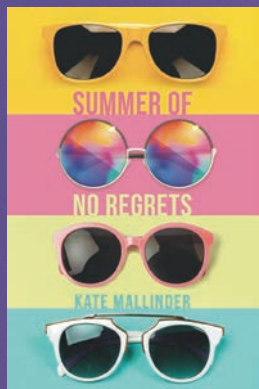
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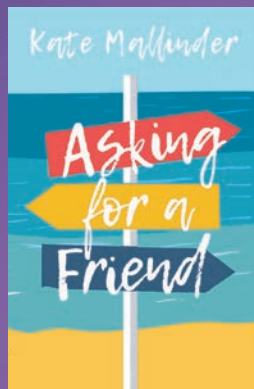
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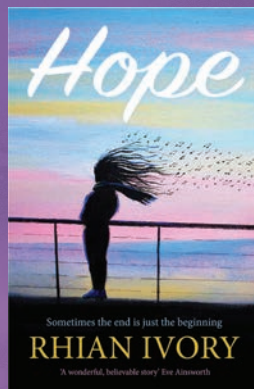
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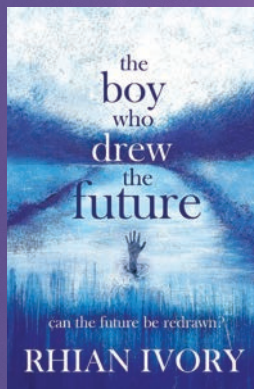


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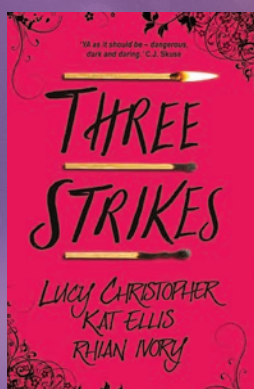
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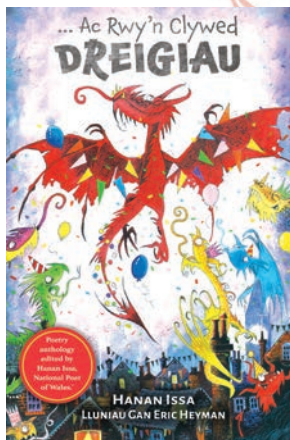
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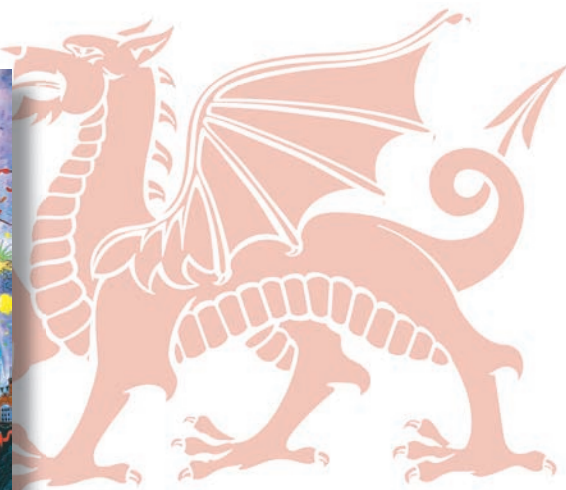
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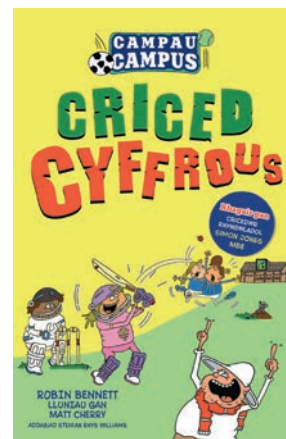
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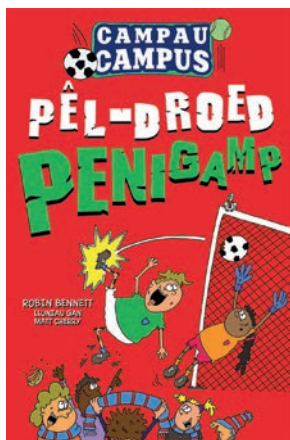
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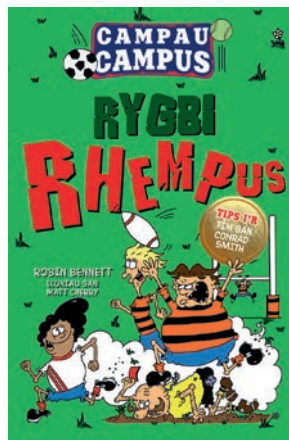
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Delyth Jewell MS

Chair, Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport,
and International Relations Committee

16 October 2024

Cardiff Airport

Dear Delyth

Following our recent annual scrutiny session with senior officials from Cardiff Airport, we have accepted an invitation to visit the Airport on Thursday 9th January to meet with officials.

We are aware of your recent correspondence with Welsh Government regarding this subject and extend an invitation to members of your committee to join us on the visit.

You may also wish to note that the Committee will be holding a further scrutiny session with senior Welsh Government officials on Wednesday 22nd January, to discuss outstanding issues relating to the Airport.

Please let me know if you and/or any members of your Committee wish to attend either the visit or the scrutiny session, in which case I will ask the Clerking Teams to liaise and make the necessary arrangements.

Regards



Mark Isherwood MS

Chair of the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Agenda Item 4.3

Hello Delyth. It was good to see you the other week to discuss Ofcom's work in Wales. You'll remember we briefly discussed the Channel 4 licence, and so I wanted to let you know that today we have [published a statement](#) on the relicensing of Channel 4 Corporation ('C4C') to provide the Channel 4 service for another ten years. Furthermore, this is the commitment from C4C to strive to reach that figure by 2028 in their letter also [published today](#).

[Home](#)

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The link below sets out C4's latest announcement on its intentions towards the Nations and Regions going forward and which members may also find helpful.

[Channel 4 unveils strategy to boost impact across the Nations and Regions | Channel 4](#)

If you would find it helpful to talk through this in any further detail I'd be happy to do so.

Best wishes, Phil

Philip Henfrey

Wales Director, Ofcom

Cyfarwyddwr Cymru, Ofcom

philip.henfrey@ofcom.org.uk

Impact of funding reductions for culture and sport

Engagement findings

October 2024

As part of the **Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee**'s inquiry into the impact of funding reductions for culture and sports, the Citizen Engagement Team proposed a qualitative approach to engagement, comprising a series of focus groups and interviews with organisations from both the arts and sports sectors. This paper communicates the findings of the engagement.



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Positive narrative19

1. Background

1. The 2024-25 Welsh Government budget saw reductions in funding for all areas of culture and sport.
2. Following widespread concerns about the impact of reduced funding for culture and sport, the Committee is considering the extent of the impact on both sectors.
3. The Committee was particularly keen to hear from those organisations it has not heard from before.

Engagement

4. Between 16 September 2024 and 25 September 2024, the Citizen Engagement Team facilitated seven focus groups and one interview with a total of 22 organisations.
5. The terms of reference considered during the engagement programme included:
 - What impacts has reduced funding had on your organisation/group?
 - What measures have you taken in light of it, such as changing what you do and how you do it?
 - To what extent will these impacts be irreversible?
 - What interventions would you like to see from the Welsh Government, beyond increased funding?
 - To what extent do the impacts you describe fall differently on people with protected characteristics and people of a lower socioeconomic status?

Participants

6. All the cultural organisations who took part in the engagement receive multi-year funding from the Arts Council of Wales and have received the 2.5% cut applied to all the 81 organisations' previous offer in September 2023.

- 7.** Two of the organisations who took part in the engagement, are new additions to the Arts Council of Wales multi-year funding.
- 8.** Many different art forms within the sector were represented in the programme of engagement, including, music, drama, dance, theatre, literature and art.
- 9.** The Citizen Engagement Team worked in collaboration with Sports Wales to identify some grassroots clubs to take part in the programme of engagement.
- 10.** Seven of the national governing bodies from the sport sector in Wales, were represented in the programme of engagement.
- 11.** All Senedd regions were represented in the engagement programme, including both urban and rural areas.
- 12.** Organisations based in low socio-economic areas, from both cultural and sport sectors, were represented in the programme of engagement.
- 13.** Thank you to everyone who contributed to the programme of engagement.

Methodology

- 14.** All focus groups and the interview were conducted online to enable as many organisations as possible to take part.
- 15.** The following discussion points were addressed during the programme of engagement:
 - a. Did your organisation/group receive reduced funding during the most recent years? If so, to what extent has the reduced funding impacted the organisation/group's work?
 - b. Have you made any changes - organisational and/or practical - within your organisation/group, in light of the reduced funding?
 - c. What do you think will be the long-term impact of any changes you might have made?
 - d. To what extent does the reduced funding impact some people more than others?

- e. Other than increased funding, what kind of support would you like to see from the Welsh Government?

Executive Summary

This report highlights the significant challenges faced by organisations due to sustained and reduced funding, affecting their priorities, operations, and ability to serve communities effectively.

Funding and Budget Constraints

All organisations report that reduced funding has forced them to prioritise survival over growth and long-term goals. Planning has become reactive, focusing on immediate budget cuts rather than strategic development. The funding landscape has become increasingly competitive, with application processes becoming more complex and less accessible. Organisations are struggling to diversify income streams, which is both time-consuming and hampers their capacity to deliver services. Additionally, rising costs, including utility bills and facility expenses, exacerbate the financial strain, creating a "perfect storm" that threatens the sustainability of many organizations.

Operational Impacts

Due to budget cuts, organisations have had to scale back or cancel existing projects and delay the initiation of new ones. This reduction limits their ability to offer diverse programs, forcing them to focus on activities that can cover essential costs, often at the expense of broader community needs. Staffing issues are prevalent, with organisations facing difficulties in retaining and attracting qualified personnel. Reduced salaries and insecure contracts have led to decreased staff morale and increased reliance on volunteers, further impacting service delivery.

Community and Social Implications

The funding shortfalls have profound effects on the communities served. Young people are deprived of opportunities to explore their talents, hindering future talent development in Wales. Older adults face increased isolation and reduced quality of life as cultural and sports programs that mitigate loneliness are cut. Rural and low socio-economic communities experience heightened barriers to accessing sports and cultural activities, exacerbating social inequalities. Additionally, support for diverse and disabled communities has weakened, limiting inclusivity and social cohesion.

Wider Economic and Health Consequences

The decline in funding negatively impacts the broader economy, particularly within the hospitality and tourism sectors. There is also a long-term effect on public health, as fewer opportunities for physical activity and creative engagement lead to increased mental health challenges and reduced overall well-being. The lack of investment in facilities and nurturing future leaders threatens the sustainability and growth of the arts and sports sectors.

Ways forward

Organisations propose several ways forward to address these challenges, primarily centred around increasing funding and simplifying the application process. Developing long-term planning strategies, enhancing support for diverse income streams, and fostering collaborations with other sectors are essential. Additionally, promoting a positive narrative about the value of arts and sports, leveraging legislation like the Well-being of Future Generations Act, and conducting pilot studies to demonstrate the benefits of targeted investments can help secure the necessary support. Strengthening networks among smaller organisations and advocating for the inclusion of the arts and sports sectors in public service boards are also recommended to ensure sustained impact and resilience.

Conclusion

The ongoing reduction in funding presents a critical threat to organisations' ability to fulfil their missions and support their communities. Addressing these financial challenges through strategic support and advocacy is essential to preserve the cultural and social fabric of Wales, ensuring that all individuals have access to vital sports and cultural opportunities.

2. Engagement Findings

This section outlines the key themes and views expressed by participants about the impact on organisations.

Impacts on organisations

Priorities

16. All organisations¹ spoke about the impact of the reduced funding on their priorities, growth and ambitions.

"The principles and things you want to achieve in terms of targets have to come second to survival....This has an impact on the people who work with us - the communities and the most vulnerable people who need us. This is the real impact."

¹ 'Organisations' refers to both cultural and sports organisations, unless otherwise stated.

"Ensuring our very existence has become our priority."

17. Having to reconsider their priorities in this way is changing the meaning and purpose of their existence, according to some cultural organisations.

Planning

18. All organisations shared examples of the impact on their planning strategy.

"We're always looking at what do we do when the next cut comes in and that's how we're planning, rather than what can we build or grow towards....that's the mindset we're in."

"We have £65,000 less, not only than what we asked for, but what we need to run the company.....We've had to reduce a small company into an even smaller company."

19. Organisations commented how competitive the trusts and foundations applications process has become in most recent years. For example, one foundation received 66 million applications for £6,000,000 available, with a 4% success rate.

20. Another organisation noted how they have written 25 applications in the first six months of 2024, with one success.

21. Diversifying income streams is time-consuming and limits their capacity to deliver opportunities.

22. Some organisations noted a narrowing in remit by many large core funders, limiting their eligibility to apply for the funding. This has happened at the same time as the reduction in public funding.

"Three years ago you could apply for anything....but now it's so much more challenging. It's the narrowing of the questions that makes it so difficult....Some funding criteria target LGBT+ for example, but we don't ask that question in our football club. We're not targeting them, we're

including them, and those two things are very different, and that is not recognised in grant applications.”

23. Many organisations feel the application process for funding, including the Arts Council of Wales Investment Review, has become complex, time-consuming and very pressurised.

24. Opportunities to apply for additional funding increases pressure and fosters uncertainty, and the amount sought is often small.

“Since the pandemic, pretty much every year, there's another funding pot available that we can apply to - whether it's for jobs protection support or cost of living support - and go through another process to secure additional funds to balance the books.”

Delivery

25. All organisations spoke about having to scale back on existing projects and either having to adapt new projects or not start them at all.

“We've just been shortlisted for an innovation award for a home delivery service to people's homes over winter, but we haven't actually got the money from anywhere to deliver it now.”

“There's been some core programmes that we've been running for 20 years that we've just had to let go of.....we have to make stringent decisions about which projects we run, which we think are the most beneficial within the communities we're serving.”

26. Some organisations referenced their frustration at having to limit their range of programmes.

“We are a theatre. People come to us, they want to see drama, they want to see musicals, and really the only thing we can afford to put on is live music and some stand-up comedy, because it's one of the only things that really cover their own bills.”

27. Organisations talked about how innovative they need to be to continue offering their activities free of charge, especially in the low socio-economic areas.

“We do a lot of community events, a lot of arts and health, a lot of work with young people. We deliver all that for free now because we could not charge for it. So, we have to fundraise to be able to deliver that work.”

Budget

28. All organisations referenced that the reduction in funding has *“in real terms, been systematic over the last seven to ten years.”*

“We’ve received reduced funding on top of reduced funding for the last decade. So, it’s even more impactful and has a severe effect.”

29. Organisations spoke about the *“perfect storm”* of funding reductions *“from all directions and at the same time.”*

30. Organisations have received a varying degree of reduction in local authority funding, with some seeing a 100% reduction in funding from their local authority.

31. Sports organisations drew attention to rising facility hiring costs, some of them having doubled over the summer period. This is having a detrimental effect on sports running from leisure centres in particular, resulting in reduced opportunities.

32. The impact of inflation and rising costs, especially utility bills, adds to the *“perfect storm”*. Such underlying costs are not recognised within the cultural sector.

“We had an £85,000 hole in our accounts last year purely because of the increase in utility bills alone. That’s not something people will fund, it’s not an artistic project.... So, we’re having to really, really reduce core activity and figure out what is it that we can do every single day that’s going to make us money and keep us afloat every single day.”

33. Some cultural organisations noted the significance of the buildings in which they are housed.

“The building, the maintaining of it, the paying the bills is where we really need public funding. It's not somewhere we can go to other sources.....The effect if they were to have dark days or closed down entirely on the country and the communities, would be huge.”

34. All organisations expressed their deep concerns about the reality of possible further funding reductions in 2025.

Staffing

35. Organisations spoke about staff retention, reduction in staff and redundancies they have had to make, to accommodate for the reduced funding, and its impact on capacity to deliver projects.

“We decided to close an hour early every day. If you're working four days a week, that's 16 hours a month lost. That has saved us a lot of money per year, and it had to be done. All the staff agreed to the change to their contracts because they love their jobs, and they do it for very little money.”

36. Many organisations noted their inability to offer increased salaries to their staff; some mentioned in the last four years others ten years. This is having a detrimental effect on the workforce.

“The ability to recruit, the ability to retain and the ability to pay people what they're worth is really, really challenging.”

37. Organisations are concerned that such staffing cuts make it challenging to attract people to work, in both arts and sports sectors.

38. Sports organisations noted how much they rely on volunteers.

“I used to do about an hour a week, it's taking about 20 hours a week of my time now. I know I choose to do it, but things are taking longer to accomplish now.”

Support

39. Whilst regretting the cuts within the Arts Council of Wales, cultural organisations noted the impact of the restructure on how it works with organisations and the limited support they're able to offer and advocate on their behalf, at a time when it is needed the most.

"We're seeing a lot less of them.....About six, seven years ago, we used to discuss our work and work plans....That conversation was important to us, but it doesn't happen anymore."

"So much organisational knowledge has been lost...we did rely on those links and that championing from the Arts Council of Wales. There needs to be an acknowledgement that the Arts Council needs to be funded to be able to support us as well."

40. Grassroots football clubs value the support they receive from their FAW club development officers, who signpost them to possible funding.

Impacts on staff

Insecurity

41. Organisations referenced the insecurity of year-on-year contracts, and its impact on staff retention.

"I don't know how much I'll keep doing this job because it is getting to the point where all I do is find funding and I hope it comes in and what do I do if it doesn't? What do I do for my staff? What do I do for the freelancers? And I think long term, can I keep doing this? And that's the reality for me."

42. All the staff in one organisation are on six-month contracts, but they strive to offer other incentives, for example training.

43. Organisations shared their concerns for the future workforce due to lack of opportunities and incentives.

“We're leaking brilliant people, brilliant skills, capabilities from the sector to other sectors because we can't offer them the fundamental three-year or longer term permanent contract that many other organisations can.”

“We're doing all we can to preserve jobs because once they go, it's very hard to bring them back in. But I do feel that everyone is working harder, and it takes more of a toll on them.”

Staff morale

44. All organisations spoke about staff commitment and their passion to serve their communities and preserve their sport and art form.

“It feels a bit like a calling for most of us, because otherwise we'd go and take all these skills we've got and work in the corporate sector and earn a ton of money. But we don't.....we want to do the best for our communities and for our art forms.”

45. However, staff morale is at an all-time low, and the need to address staff well-being greater than ever.

Impacts on participants and communities

46. Due to their limited capacity to deliver projects and opportunities, all organisations spoke about the impacts of the reduced funding on the people they serve, and their ability to promote social cohesion, inclusivity and quality of life via the sports and cultural sector.

Young people

47. Organisations working with young people expressed their concerns that they are unable to provide young people with a full range of opportunities to explore

their potential and discover their creative and sporting talents. As such, Wales is depriving itself of future talent.

48. Cultural organisations working with the education sector expressed their concerns about having to either restrict their offer to schools or increase their charges for their services.

49. As schools consider other, cheaper ways of introducing culture, in all its forms, to learners, the learner's experience of culture is restricted.

"When you take theatre to schools a lot of learners get to experience theatre. They don't get to experience theatre otherwise. It's important to us that we cater for all learners, not just those who can afford to go to the theatre."

50. Organisations also spoke about the preventative benefits of sports and cultural opportunities for young people, more so a post-pandemic generation of children and young people.

51. Fewer sports and cultural opportunities for young people, in a safe and caring environment, lead to increased loneliness and lack of confidence which in turn leads to an increased need for costly mental health support.

Older people

52. Organisations spoke about the impact on the older generation, and the need for a better quality of life for people living longer. The culture sector, in all its forms, plays an essential part in this and in bringing people together to mitigate isolation and loneliness.

"We are a lifeline for the community, not just for mental health, but it's that loneliness and isolation. It's all those soft outcomes that people talk about that are massively part of preventative services."

"You don't want to stop and start things either especially groups that are more vulnerable, for example, we've run our dementia group for the last 11-12 years because that's the kind of group you cannot stop – that would be awful for people."

Rural communities

53. Cultural organisations based in rural areas noted how the reduced funding has intensified their challenge to offer opportunities within rural areas, for all ages.

54. Some organisations noted how limited travel infrastructure and increasing costs for participants have become even more of a barrier to accessing opportunities within the culture sector.

Disability groups

55. A challenging travel infrastructure limiting accessibility to sports facilities, was also discussed by some sports organisations.

"If the transport links aren't accessible, you're removing potentially a whole community of people who aren't going to be able to get to the facility, even if the facility is brand new and perfectly accessible for disabled people as well."

Diverse communities

56. Organisations noted the lack of support and opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds, of all ages, but particularly young people. This is highlighted further with the reduced funding.

"We still have a really, really poor record in relation to diversity in the arts in Wales and in supporting young people and artists from global majority backgrounds."

57. Some cultural organisations spoke about their concern about the impact of reduced funding on their invaluable work with refugees and asylum seekers, one of the few safe spaces they have to share and celebrate their culture and identity.

"The impact of a project is often visible on the margins....We often hear, 'If this place closed, I don't know what I'd do.' We're able to reach out to the people who need us most."

Low socio-economic communities

58. Sports organisations noted the increasing barriers facing people from low-socio-economic backgrounds to accessing leisure and sports opportunities.

"There are enough barriers to entry for sport anyway, but cost is becoming increasingly the number one barrier now."

"It just seems so unfair, because it's the people that need it the most that it's impacting the most."

59. Some sports organisations referenced the essential focus on active travel., for example cycle paths. Yet, 40% of children have never ridden a bike.

60. Some cultural organisations emphasised how crucial it is for them to be able to offer free activities for their immediate communities and how they provide food at the activities.

"Providing food at our events for free or a suggested donation cost is important, because our Easter events were in the second week of the Easter holidays and we knew there were children turning up who hadn't eaten that week...but that isn't the purpose of an arts charity. But we do the work because we're grassroots, and these people trust us...it's wider than arts and culture."

61. Organisations strive to be as inclusive and flexible as possible to encourage participation, regardless of personal circumstances, however challenging.

"We work with some people who live hand to mouth. Sometimes some pay as they get their salary. If a session costs £4, they bring £1.50 one week and pay the rest as they can."

"There are people who don't want to tell us about their financial challenges and would rather their children not play than admit that they cannot afford it. This is the true impact of reduced funding."

62. Grassroots football clubs have applied for FAW PAWB fund, supporting young people to access football opportunities/equipment, but are aware of the high demand for the fund.

Wider impacts of reduced funding

Nurturing talent

63. People from lower socio-economic backgrounds are often unable to access or benefit from opportunities within the sports and cultural sector. As a result, Wales is losing a lot of talent.

"I genuinely feel ashamed that the arts are lagging behind in Wales. It's so much in our DNA to know that the arts are integral."

64. One organisation working with talented young people across Wales, explained how dependent they are on grassroots organisations to nurture future talent.

65. Many organisations spoke of "*the void ahead*". Young people are inspired by successful people in their fields, but they are deprived of the opportunities that led their role models to their success.

66. Sports organisations expressed deep concern about the impact of underinvestment on facilities, on all levels, from the local swimming pool to world-class training facilities.

"It's been 25 years since anything that resembles a world-class training facility has been invested in and built in Wales, and yet we expect our athletes to be able to perform and inspire future generations.....We have a real potential of irreversible impact with our performance athletes."

67. Organisations drew attention to the lack of opportunities available to nurture future leadership roles in the cultural sector.

“We take a lot of placements from universities and from colleges and it’s difficult to look a young person in the eye and say this is a sensible career decision with the skills and talent you have.”

“We will get to a stage where we cannot run our organisations because nobody is prepared to take those positions of leadership and responsibility...this is a real concern for me that there is no support for people who want to take a leadership position in the arts.”

68. Cultural organisations spoke about the impact of funding reductions on freelancers.

69. Having had to diversify during the pandemic, many freelancers now face further challenges as cultural organisations struggle to offer them opportunities and contracts.

70. Cultural organisations in rural areas especially, expressed their concerns about the impact of not being able to support freelancers, who either must consider a career change or relocate to more urban areas to seek work opportunities.

“We have internationally renowned artists who are asking if we can pay their invoice today because they haven’t got enough money for the rent. It’s a regular occurrence, it’s not a one-off and not something we should be proud of.”

Health matters

71. Sports organisations spoke about the impact of funding reductions on the least active and the long-term impact on health and well-being.

“As fewer individuals champion the value of physical activity in sports, it is less likely that people who aren’t currently doing it will get involved.”

72. Some sports organisations noted recent investment in schools with no input from the sport sector. Such developments are a missed opportunity to focus on

the needs of the school and the local community and consider inclusive opportunities with a range of facilities that support physical activity for all.

"On one side of the community, we've got leisure facilities that are extremely aged and have fallen apart and a school down the road has brand new shiny facilities that aren't fit for purpose and haven't taken into consider what's actually needed by the local community."

Creativity

73. Cultural organisations shared their concerns about the impact of the lack of creative opportunities on young people and future generations.

"For young people to flourish in general, they all need to be creative. They all need to have that artistic opportunity and not just to have one opportunity, but to choose from a whole range of different ones."

"People think a country can live without the arts. But you have to think of the arts as more than entertainment to understand the impact of the cuts."

Economy

74. Organisations spoke about the impact of the decline in their industries, on the economy, especially within the hospitality and tourism sectors.

3. Ways forward

75. Below a collection of ideas and proposals suggested by organisations during engagement sessions are presented. These ideas represent diverse perspectives aimed at improving the current situation. It is important to note that while these suggestions reflect the creativity and concerns of organisations, they have not been unanimously agreed upon. Rather, they were brought forward during discussions as potential pathways for positive change and are shared here to inspire further dialogue and consideration.

Budget

76. Although organisations shared ideas about ways of supporting them and the people they serve, all noted that *“it is about the money at the end of the day.”*

“I think it's important to say that there is a really skilled workforce, people all around Wales, who know exactly what needs doing with great ideas and have the skills to do it. So, in some ways, it is just about the money.”

Planning support

77. Develop a strategy to allow organisations to focus on long-term planning and less on last-minute expenditure, to improve stability and aid a more strategic use of funding.

78. Consider a more concise way of distributing funding so that it's not so labour-intensive from the perspective of the organisations applying for it.

79. Improved signposting and support to access funding opportunities, beyond the Arts Council of Wales funding.

Positive narrative

80. Develop opportunities to action the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

“We've got this amazing piece of ground-breaking legislation, which is the Well-being of Future Generations Act, and we need to use it more as a tool rather than it just sitting there. It should be the driver of a holistic approach to illustrate the impact of the arts.”

81. Advocate a far more positive and wider narrative about the value and benefits of the arts and leisure and physical activity for all, not only those who can afford it.

“The Welsh Government needs to stand up and say the arts is absolutely essential for our culture and for the well-being of the nation.”

- 82.** Acknowledge the contribution of grassroots community clubs and organisations, where successful sportspeople and artists, from all disciplines, have started their careers.
- 83.** Develop a leisure and sport facility strategy across Wales. The previous one dates back to 2016.
- 84.** Champion professional career opportunities within the arts and culture sector, to secure essential future leadership roles within the sector.
- 85.** Advocate for the arts and culture sector on public service boards.

“Never before has innovation and imagination been more needed.....that's what we bring.”

- 86.** Proactively draw on the expertise of the sport sector, when planning strategies, for example, LGBTQ+ action plan, the Anti-Racist Wales action plan and the Disability action plan.
- 87.** Develop a more holistic approach to working with other sectors that rely on the arts and sports, for example the health and education sector.

“There's something fundamentally wrong that people want to use the arts, they know the value of it, but they're not prepared to put the actual price on the value of it.”

“Movement, physical activity and sports are a significant solution to a lot of wider social issues and challenges.”

- 88.** Develop a movement, physical activity and sport strategy, acknowledging how they can bring different sectors together to develop skills, community cohesion and tackle isolation.
- 89.** Conduct a pilot study: targeted arts investment in one region or community, to measure the impact on health, education, happiness, mental health and ultimately the impact on public services. For example, re-allocating a small fraction of the money spent on teenage mental health and investing it in targeted programmes in the arts for teenagers. This would have an enormous positive impact on young people and the pressures on public services.

90. Strengthen opportunities to allow smaller organisations to network, be informed and support each other.

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