



Helen Mary Jones MS
Chair
Culture, Welsh Language and Communications
Committee

11 December 2020

Dear Helen,

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

At the Plenary Debate on the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee's Report on the Impact of COVID-19 on the Creative Industries on 11 November, I agreed to write to you to provide further information on questions raised during the discussion. This information is set out below:

Lessons which have been learned from the distribution of grant funding to freelancers for future tranches

The freelancer fund has been well received by stakeholders and will have supported around 3,500 freelancers across Wales since its launch in October. The fund was delivered through three separate phases and closed on 7 December. The phased approach to delivery has allowed us to learn from earlier phases and adopt an iterative approach to delivery.

It became clear following delivery of phase one that, despite measures introduced to support an inclusive approach to the distribution of funding, some of those who were unable to receive support were left frustrated by the process. We responded to this feedback and in subsequent phases of delivery, we:

- Took action to increase awareness raising activity on funding windows, including time of opening, through the Business Wales website, social media channels and local authority and wider stakeholder mechanisms;
- Provided additional windows for those with accessibility issues to register an interest in the funding before the formal opening of phases;
- Worked with Disability Arts Cymru to run a workshop prior to phase three launch for freelancers requiring additional support to access the fund;

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

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

- Increased the funding available to support freelancers in Wales by £3.5m to support a third phase, taking the total allocation to £10.5m;
- Amended the approach to allocating funds across local authorities for the third phase to provide funding wholly based on demand, with allocations agreed with each local authority at the close of the phase to cover the budget committed.

The close partnership established with stakeholders in the design and delivery of the scheme allowed us to make these changes quickly and efficiently. The Welsh Government engaged regularly with creative and cultural unions, representatives from the freelance community and with the local authorities delivering the fund at all stages. This supported a genuinely collaborative approach that provided agility and flexibility in adapting the fund to respond to feedback and meet stakeholder needs.

The delivery of this fund has highlighted the need for quantitative information on the creative and cultural freelancer community in Wales, including data on the number of freelancers operating in these sectors in Wales and their value to the economy. The evaluation of the freelancer fund, which has been built into the overall evaluation of the Cultural Recovery Fund, will help to gather useful information on freelancers in receipt of funding. The relationships developed with creative and cultural unions and representatives of the Wales Freelance Taskforce has also provided the opportunity to commence a broader conversation on the contribution of freelancers to the economy, culture and wellbeing of Wales. The Freelancer Pledge Working Group provides a key focus for this work.

Information on what the Welsh Government's response to the Ofcom consultation on the future of public service broadcasting might include

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the key role public services broadcasters play in serving audiences and supporting the creative industries in Wales. The Welsh Government's response to the Ofcom 'Small Screen: Big Debate' consultation on the future of public service broadcasting will reflect the need to ensure public service broadcasters in Wales can continue to provide a service that meets the needs of Welsh citizens and support our creative economy. Ofcom published its 'Small Screen: Big Debate' consultation document on 8 December - <https://www.smallscreenbigdebate.co.uk/consultation>. The document sets out the findings of the Ofcom review and considers how public service broadcasting can be strengthened and maintained in the face of unprecedented change. The Welsh Government will provide a written response to the consultation by the deadline of 16 March 2021.

An update on reopening theatres and other arts venues to the public and when we could expect Welsh Government guidance in this area

The Welsh Government has started the process of allowing theatres to reopen in a limited capacity. The National Coronavirus Regulations were amended following the recent firebreak period and the Welsh Government's guidance has been revised accordingly, making it clear that although theatres must generally remain closed, they can now be used to host a broadcast without an audience present at the premises (whether over the internet or as part of a radio or television broadcast) and to rehearse for such a broadcast. In light of the wider public health context, theatres and concert halls are required to remain closed to the general public and our test events programme is on hold.

At the present time, we cannot consider authorising the presence of audiences at theatre based performances. We see theatres and concert halls as integral to our approach to test events, which will not resume now until February 2021 at the earliest. Officials will remain in contact with the sector in order to inform our plans for the resumption of test events. Our expectation is that events more generally, including larger gatherings, will not resume until

the spring and the £63m Cultural Recovery Fund will be supporting the sector and ensuring its long-term sustainability in the meantime.

Yours sincerely,

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

Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas AS/MS

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