

We request that the Welsh Government purchase St David's Hall as a national resource for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 6 Chwefror 2023
Petitions Committee | 6 February 2023

Reference: SR20/****

Petition Number: P-06-1323

Petition title: We request that the Welsh Government purchase St David's Hall as a national resource for Wales

Text of petition: This is a heartfelt plea to prevent the loss of a vital cultural resource to the people of Wales; We call upon the Welsh Government to step in.

A transfer of management of The National Concert Hall of Wales to a commercial organisation would risk this vital and vibrant resource for the community and cultural life of Cardiff inevitably leading to impacts on the wider creative infrastructure of Wales.

The venue hosts over 330 performances per year, many of national and international profile, attracting attendees from every postcode in Wales as well as the highest percentage of English visitors of all Welsh venues.

It is the only purpose-built orchestral concert hall in the country able to host a full symphony orchestra. It is the home of Cardiff Singer of the World, National Orchestra of Wales, and the world class International Concert Series- alongside a varied cultural offering including ballet, pop/rock music, comedians, jazz and folk.

The venue delivers to all ages the opportunities for creative participation and engagement, representing an invaluable community and learning resource for the people of Cardiff and whole of Wales



1. Background

In December 2022 Cardiff Council approved an offer from Academy Music Group in principle to take over the running of St David's Hall as the National Concert Hall of Wales, via a long-term lease. Council papers state:

The Council has only been able to afford to implement a basic maintenance programme to cover general wear and tear amounting to circa £2m of capital and circa £600k of revenue over the last 10 years. This has become increasingly insufficient as the building has grown older.

And:

The allocated revenue subsidy from the Council for St David's Hall is £688,700 in the current year. However, the venue regularly achieves lower box office revenue than forecast and as such the actual level of Council financial support regularly exceeds £1m per annum. The unallocated budget spend is required to be absorbed within wider directorate budgets and each year this is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve due to the growing pressure on Council budgets. This problem will be magnified significantly in the next financial year as the Council is forecasting a revenue budget shortfall of circa £53m.

The option the Council has agreed in principle is intended to provide the Council an equivalent saving compared to the Council maintaining operation of the Hall) of £133m over a 40-year capital repayment programme.

2. Welsh Government action

On 1 December 2022 the Welsh Government responded to a Written Question from Rhys ab Owen MS asking What discussions has the Welsh Government had with Cardiff Council regarding securing a long-term sustainable future for St David's Hall, Cardiff?

The response said "the future of the venue is an issue for Cardiff Council" and did not reference any discussions between the Welsh Government and Cardiff Council. A letter from the Arts Council of Wales (see section 3 below) suggests that

Title:

Welsh Government officials have since been involved in discussions about the future of the Hall.

During [First Minister's Questions on 29 November 2022](#) the First Minister said:

I think it's too early to be concerned, Llywydd, because we don't know enough details. I've had an opportunity today to speak to the council leader here in Cardiff, and I'm sure that he's aware of every point that Rhys ab Owen has raised. So, they are doing the work with not just one company but with more than one company that has shown an interest in collaborating with the council on the future of St David's Hall.

3. Welsh Parliament action

The Senedd Culture, Welsh Language, Communications, Sport and International Relations Committee has written to Cardiff Council and the Arts Council about the future of St David's Hall.

Copies of the letters and responses can be read [here](#). The Arts Council's letter (dated 12 December 2022) notes "There have been a number of discussions regarding this matter which have included representatives of Welsh Government".

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.