

Lesley Griffiths MS  
Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice  
Welsh Government

8 May 2024

## **Protecting the national collections**

Dear Lesley

I write to you following the reports about the future of [Amgueddfa Cymru](#) and the [National Library for Wales](#), as well as in response to your [recent letter](#) to the Committee (dated 04 April 2024).

In your letter to the Committee, when speaking about the need to prioritise future consequential funding for protecting the national collections, you note that:

*Our national collections are an integral part of our heritage. We will continue to play our part in ensuring they are safe for future generations. This includes continuing to prioritise funding to our arm's length bodies to protect the national collections.*

Whilst we welcome this stance, we are concerned that the Welsh Government's actions to date have failed to recognise the seriousness, or the significance, of the dire situation facing our national collections which are housed at Amgueddfa Cymru and the National Library for Wales. You note that the previous Deputy Minister was assured that the national collections were safe: recent news reports, however, would suggest that this was not the case. We wrote to your predecessor in this post on several occasions to raise similar concerns.

We first [highlighted the issue in January 2022](#) during scrutiny of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget for 2022-23. In our report, we noted that proposed reductions of over 30 per cent in capital funding for Amgueddfa Cymru and the National Library would potentially pose "a serious threat to some important collections." At the time, we recommended that the Welsh Government should

outline how it would help both institutions address their capital maintenance backlogs. In response to this recommendation, ministers told us that both institutions had responded positively to their draft budget allocations, and that across the culture portfolio there had been a substantial increase in capital spending.

We expressed further reservations a year later in January 2023 during Draft Budget Scrutiny. While capital funding for Amgueddfa Cymru increased that year, the capital budget for the National Library was reduced again by 20 per cent. We were informed that, as a result, there would be a “very serious risk to the collections which [they deemed] to be totally unacceptable without additional funding.” In conclusion, we stated that:

*“Both these institutions are of significant cultural value for our nation, and we think consideration should be given to how these institutions are provided with funding to manage their national treasures.”*

We wrote again, in March 2023, to the then Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip, raising concerns about safeguarding the national collections. We drew attention to the maintenance backlog of £65m at Amgueddfa Cymru, of which £15m was deemed essential. We sought assurances from the Welsh Government that the future of the national collections housed at both Amgueddfa Cymru and the National Library of Wales were safe. In response (dated 27 April 2023), the Deputy Minister told us that:

*“the Welsh Government has prioritised funding for front line services, particularly health services, in the most recent Budget. It is not possible to fund everything that we would wish to, and difficult decisions have had to be made.”*

We reiterated these concerns through the summer of 2023 and during this year’s Draft Budget scrutiny process. As we were told in autumn 2023, Amgueddfa Cymru said:

*“We're having to look at a restructuring of the museum and a remodelling of what we do, in order to be able to adapt to what we think will be a new financial landscape. And that means we're going to have to probably be a smaller museum.”*

They added that they required £90million of capital funding to safeguard the national collections for which they are responsible over the next decade.

The responses received to date by the Welsh Government on this issue have, we have felt, been unsatisfactory. Whilst we have recognised the severe funding constraints faced by the Welsh Government, we are of the view that protecting our national collections is of vital importance to our identity as a nation.

As you will be aware, we have **recently** called for a cross-government mission to assume the responsibility for protecting our national collections. We recognise that it is unfair for one government department to shoulder this responsibility alone. Ensuring that there is a collective government effort in protecting our national collections would ensure that the collections are safeguarded at the present time, and also for future generations. In doing so, the Welsh Government would be acting consistently with the Future Wellbeing goal of a “Wales of vibrant culture”.

It was refreshing to hear you note in **Plenary** recently that you think that this matter is a “cross-Government” issue, as well as to hear your recognition of how important it is to protect these collections. We also welcome your comments about ensuring that as much of these collections as possible are on view to the public.

We would welcome an indication of how you will change the course of this issue and ensure that the national collections are not only safeguarded for the present moment, but are also available for future generations to enjoy.

I look forward to receiving your response by 6 June 2024.

Yours sincerely,



**Delyth Jewell MS**  
**Committee Chair**

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.