



Delyth Jewell MS
Chair Culture, Communication, Welsh Language,
Sport and International Relations Committee

17 June 2024

Dear Delyth,

Thank you for your letter of 21 May to Lesley Griffiths MS, Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice regarding the distribution of funding for magazines by the Books Council Wales. I am responding as publishing falls within my portfolio responsibilities.

The Welsh Government recognises the importance of the Books Council to the publishing sector in Wales. We value the Books Council's crucial contribution to our rich linguistic and cultural life, the important role it plays in promoting reading for pleasure, the assistance it gives to the publishing sector, as well as its significant contribution to the Welsh Government's ambition for growing the Welsh language in line with our Welsh language strategy, *Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers*. We also recognise the importance of magazines to the sector in Wales and the role they play in encouraging high quality writing and debate of culture, literature and current affairs and in supplementing content provided through broadsheet media.

In response to the specific points raised in your letter:

What discussions the Welsh Government has had with the Books Council of Wales about its ongoing budget needs.

We are committed to working with the Books Council as a key partner to support the publishing sector. In line with grant monitoring arrangements, official level meetings are held with the Books Council on a quarterly basis, and I met with the Books Council in Aberystwyth on 6 June to commence my formal Ministerial six-monthly meeting arrangements. These formal arrangements support discussion on a range of matters, including finance and budget needs and complement the regular, informal engagement between my officials and the Books Council. This close working relationship enables the Books Council to highlight any opportunities and challenges in a timely manner, including the financial pressures being faced by the sector. Where possible, we take action in response to support the industry. Examples of this include the additional funding made available in response to the cost of living crisis and to deliver the New Audiences Funds.

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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.

What considerations the Welsh Government has given to providing additional support to the Books Council of Wales, beyond what has been provided by the Creative Wales in 2024-25.

Recognising the important contribution of the Books Council's work to delivery of wider portfolio priorities, grants are awarded to the Books Council from other Welsh Government departments. An annual Education grant of £140,000 is awarded to support literacy programmes such as World Book Day, Summer Reading Challenge and Quick Reads. The Education Department also awarded an additional £5m for a book gifting scheme in 2021-22, *Schools Love Reading*, to promote reading. The Culture Division of the Welsh Government is supporting the Reading Well project in 2024-25 with £50,000 of funding to enable provision of books and e-books to relaunch the Reading Well for dementia scheme in Welsh public libraries. The Culture Division also has provided £20,500 of funding in 2024-25 to support the delivery of the Summer Reading Challenge in Welsh public libraries. The Curriculum Division and Cymraeg 2050 are jointly funding a grant of over £800,000 to the Books Council for a project called Rhyngom. This is a three-year grant (2022-25) to create reading materials for learners between the ages of 3-16 with an insight into Wales' culture, people, and history, as well as the wider world. The scheme supports the Curriculum for Wales' 4 purposes, supports key empathy skills, and sparks learners' imagination, whilst also contributing to their mental and emotional wellbeing.

These grants, over and above the core funding provided by Creative Wales, inject further investment into the publishing sector and its broader infrastructure to support its ongoing sustainability.

What considerations the Welsh Government has given to ensuring there is sufficient financial support available to support magazine journalism in Wales.


We are continuing to work with the Books Council to explore opportunities to secure additional funding for the sector, including for magazines. Through the Co-operation Agreement budget, £235,000 additional funding has been awarded to the Books Council to support Welsh magazines. £14,941 was awarded to magazines in June 2021 and a further £30,000 in December 2021 from the emergency funding awarded in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. £87,231 of the £300,000 fund for publishers and booksellers awarded in response to the cost of living crisis was allocated to magazines. In addition, the New Audiences Funds have benefitted magazines.

The Welsh Government is also taking forward wider activity to support journalistic content, including funding to support hyper-locals and the Senedd reporter project, and through the work of the Wales Public Interest Journalism Working Group. The Group brings together representatives, including the Books Council, to discuss issues facing print media in Wales and potential actions to help ensure a sustainable sector for the future. These discussions have and will continue to include Welsh magazine publications and will help support decisions on the allocation of the 2024/25 budget for media and journalism. In addition, the Welsh Government, through Mentrau Iaith Cymru, supports a network of Papurau Bro (Welsh language community local newspapers) throughout Wales, with £93,000 awarded for 2024-25.

As you appreciate, the Welsh Government's 2024-25 Budget was developed amidst the toughest financial situation Wales has faced since the start of devolution, with Ministers having to make stark and painful choices on spending plans in response. In the context of these extremely challenging economic times, I remain committed to working with the Books

Council to explore every opportunity to support the publishing sector, recognising its importance to the people of Wales.

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Murphy". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a large initial 'S' and a stylized 'M'.

Sarah Murphy AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Partneriaeth Gymdeithasol
Minister for Social Partnership