

Lesley Griffiths AS/MS  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Ddiwylliant a Chyfiawnder  
Cymdeithasol  
Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Delyth Jewell MS  
Chair - Culture, Communications, Welsh Language,  
Sport, and International Relations  
Committee  
Senedd Cymru  
[SeneddCulture@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddCulture@senedd.wales)

25 June 2024

Dear Delyth,

Thank you for your correspondence of 21 May regarding funding for the Welsh National Opera (WNO).

This is a matter for the Arts Council of Wales (ACW). Under the arm's-length funding principle, ACW's Investment Review is an issue for ACW alone and the Welsh Government does not get involved in any of its funding decisions.

I met with the Chair and Chief Executive of ACW last month to discuss the current position of the arts sectors in Wales, including the Music sector. I also recently met with the WNO, including Chair Yvette Vaughan Jones, Interim General Director Christopher Barron and Executive Director Stephanie Bradley. We discussed the current issues at WNO in detail and I understand that work is underway in the organisation to respond to these reductions in funding.

Whilst WNO has received an overall reduction in its core funding from the ACW of £604k between 2023-24 and 2024-25, it is still receiving the largest multi-year funding offer of all its 81 organisations and opera remains the artform receiving its greatest investment. ACW is in discussions with WNO to identify and agree the activity to be delivered in response to this offer, ensuring planned programming may be protected as much as possible.

ACW is also aware of the financial impact of the reduction in its funding agreement with Arts Council England (ACE) as a result of its review of its National Portfolio organisations in November 2022 and new funding arrangements for 2023-26, however it is not in a position to make good the reduction itself. It also notes ACE has also awarded WNO a further £3.2 million over 3 years in Transform funding, to support WNO in developing a revised business model.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

[Gohebiaeth.Dawn.Bowden@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Dawn.Bowden@llyw.cymru)  
[Correspondence.Dawn.Bowden@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Dawn.Bowden@gov.wales)

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.

The role of ACW is to create an environment where the knowledge, understanding and practice of the arts can flourish and where everybody in Wales can engage with the arts. Its aspiration is a Wales of ambition and fairness where the most exciting arts are created. Arts are integral to the health and wellbeing of the nation, relevant to all communities.

As I reiterated in Plenary, and when I met with the Chair and Chief Executive of WNO in May, I will do all I can to help the organisation navigate this very difficult period. I understand the Welsh National Opera's unique cross border funding arrangement and I intend to write to the Chief Executives of both arts councils to encourage them to maintain an open dialogue on the matter.

While the Welsh Government understands ACW will inevitably have to undertake some difficult decisions when it comes to funding, it noted opera is receiving 71% of the total spend on the music sector for 2024-25.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lesley Griffiths". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'L' and 'G'.

**Lesley Griffiths AS/MS**

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