

Planet: the Welsh Internationalist magazine
(Berw Ltd.)



02.07. 2024

Dear Delyth Jewell and colleagues,

Good evening. I'm writing to you and to the Culture Committee in advance of your meeting on 10 July 2024 as a follow up to correspondence from BCW from the 4th of June that was later published on your website. Many thanks to you and the committee members for the ongoing discussion of the concerns around funding for magazines – we're very grateful for the time you are dedicating to this.

I'm writing to again correct and clarify the record regarding a number of points made by BCW, this time in their letter from 04.06.24 as a follow up to correspondence redressing other points made by BCW. Please can this letter also be published on the Senedd website and circulated to the committee.

Helgard Krause makes the following, potentially misleading claim in her letter: 'The tender is for a brand-new magazine with unsuccessful applicants from the previous round welcome to apply. However, none of the unsuccessful applicants decided to take up this new opportunity.' For avoidance of any doubt, it's absolutely not the case that *Planet* (and, I imagine, *New Welsh Review*) was eligible, let alone welcome to apply for the tender for a 'brand-new' magazine.

Firstly, and obviously, in *Planet's* case we would not be eligible as the 2024 tender is (to quote from BCW's tender document) for a single 'literary' magazine only 'which covers the following areas: short fiction, creative non-fiction, literary review and criticism'. Please see attached the 2024 tender. This is in contrast to the 2023 tender, which was divided into several categories – one opportunity being for 'Funding for general magazines', which would include 'coverage of a range of topics. Possible subject areas could include current affairs, politics, history, economics, the arts (e.g. visual arts, music, drama, dance, and literature), culture (including popular culture), media, the environment, sport and leisure.' This wider general magazines category is the one which matched *Planet's* remit, and the category we have always applied for. Another, narrower, category was 'Funding for literary magazines', plus opportunities for much smaller grants for 'Funding for development'. I've also attached this earlier tender for your records.

Secondly, and even more obviously, as the tender document and wider BCW publicity of this tender makes clear, this opportunity, first announced in December 2023 with the tender publicised from March 2024 is for a 'brand-new magazine'. Therefore, it would be absurd to

suggest that a magazine that had existed from 1970 onwards and ceased publishing after its February 2024 – April 2024 issue (i.e. *Planet*) would ever have been eligible, nor would a literary magazine that had been published since 1988 – i.e. *New Welsh Review* (whose work is ongoing – as Parthian Books purchased the rights earlier this year).

In light of all this, it barely needs to be said that nothing in all our correspondence with BCW since the funding decision was made known to us suggests that we – as *Planet* or as a publishing company more generally – would be eligible, let alone welcome, to apply for this new tender. Indeed, the terms of the 2024 tender seem to explicitly exclude the possibility of *Planet* or *New Welsh Review* being able to apply. The reference in BCW's correspondence with the Committee and accompanying documents re. BCW's strategic priority of 'challenging incumbency' with regard to applicants to their funding schemes also bears this out.

I'm writing also to clarify and redress potential misunderstanding re. the following sentence in the letter from Helgard Krause: 'A total of 9 franchise applications were evaluated against all relevant criteria; five applications did not meet these criteria and weren't funded at all.' This is misleading as it could suggest that *Planet* did not meet one or more of the relevant funding criteria, and so was lacking in some way, for reasons somehow under our control, and that we were fully aware of all criteria that would be considered as part of our application. This is not the case: the only 'rationale' BCW could find to remove funding from *Planet* and Berw Ltd (the company which owns *Planet*) were variously untrue, and/or absurd and mind-bogglingly unfair (and likely defamatory) arguments that were detailed in our Zoom meeting with yourself in Spring 2024, emerging from a process significantly lacking in transparency, with further points outlined in correspondence (and attachments) from 17.04.24, 13.05.24 and 14.05.24. BCW's arguments were further revealed to be double-think when it emerged in December 2023 that there was c. £95,000 left to disburse from the budget for the tender we applied to in 2023.

It's worth noting that BCW confirmed in December 2023 that they had relayed 'the full extent of the subcommittee's feedback [about *Planet* – i.e. the full rationale for denying us funding]' – feedback that we subsequently challenged in full with detailed evidence, with BCW unable to provide what I would consider any kind of coherent come-back, let alone any counter-evidence.

I would like to reiterate two points: firstly, that BCW like any organisation is not a monolith – we've also experienced genuine kindness, support and good sense in various BCW contexts over the years that we remain grateful for, and in light of longstanding (and sometimes ongoing) positive contributions to the Welsh public sphere from BCW, it's tragic that recent experience has been so disappointing and demoralising for a number of publishers.

Secondly, the aim of my correspondence is to constructively highlight serious concerns about the funding system for the benefit of all publishers, as well as redressing anything potentially untrue or misleading about *Planet* (in the hope we can apply for funding in the future in a reformed system). We wouldn't want any other publisher to have experienced what we have been through recently. More broadly, following the experience of *Planet* and *New Welsh Review* at the forefront of a campaign for ethical funding conditions, I believe that there needs to be a publishing and media environment where magazines and their workers feel they can publicly raise issues with regard to funding cuts and targets and their impact on fair working practices, without fear of losing the publications and livelihoods they hold so dear.

I'm now the sole remaining Director of Berw Ltd with limited time, and having ceased trading the company has no employees – this means I feel more vulnerable than ever when raising these

concerns. As a micro-organisation, our resources and access to PR, legal and political contacts were always dwarfed by those available to funding bodies. Despite this, as time allows, I'm determined to continue to engage with this issue.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emily Trahair', with a small apostrophe at the end.

Emily Trahair