

# Fund music education for future generations in the “land of song”

Pwyllgor Deisebau | 28 Ebrill 2025  
Petitions Committee | 28 April 2025

Reference: SR25/11030

**Petition Number:** [P-06-1509](#)

**Petition title:** Fund music education for future generations in the “land of song”.

**Text of petition:** Music is an inalienable part of Wales’s cultural identity. Our choirs, bands, orchestras & opera companies are world-class, & contribute to Wales’s international brand & tourist economy.

Over recent years, free instrumental tuition has vanished from our schools. The loan of free instruments to learn on has gone. Now, Wales’s biggest university plans to close its music department due to financial pressures.

Music in Wales is in crisis. Falling student numbers are a direct consequence of the decimation of grass roots music - if pupils in school cannot learn music, they cannot progress to study it at university.

Music teaches discipline, teamwork, concentration and how to perform, literally, under pressure. These skills are vital to a young person’s development, regardless if they go on to be professional musicians.

Cardiff University’s Music Department has trained some of Wales’s most important composers, including Grace Williams, Alun Hoddinott and Karl Jenkins. It now faces a perfect storm created by the destruction of music education in our schools, the underfunding of higher education in Wales more generally and the loss of income from international students driven by changes to visa regulations.



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Wales needs a strategy to protect music for future generations, to retain our place as a global force and support the creative industries.

## 1. Background

### 1.1. Music in schools

Music is a subject in the current national curriculum and is one of the five disciplines within the **Expressive Arts Area of Learning and Experience** of the Curriculum for Wales. The curriculum was introduced in phases from September 2022 and will be used for all secondary school pupils by the 2026/27 academic year. This is complemented by non-statutory, extra-curricular music provision. Pupils accessing music services in schools are the first level of Wales' 'pyramid' system whereby young musicians can progress to local and regional ensembles up to the **national youth ensembles**. This music tuition has often been provided by local authority music services. However in some areas in Wales there are other models of delivery, such as co-operative arrangements, charitable bodies and independent providers.

In 2015, the then Minister for Education, Huw Lewis established a **Task and Finish Group** to examine the role of local authority music services. This identified challenges in sustaining and developing high quality music services provision and a disparity of existing provision and growing inequality of opportunity to access services.

### 1.2. Higher education

A number of other universities in Wales are in the process of consulting on reductions in staff and courses in the context of increasing financial pressures.

On **28 January 2025**, **Cardiff University** began a consultation on proposed reduction of 400 (Full Time Equivalent) academic and the possibility of School and subject closures and School mergers. Their proposals include ceasing subjects and programmes in Ancient History, Modern Languages and Translation, Music, Nursing, and Religion and Theology. The consultation will run for three months

and final plans for approval are expected to be considered by University Council in June 2025.

On 17 February 2025, the [Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee wrote](#) to the President and Vice-Chancellor of Cardiff University, Professor Wendy Lerner, inviting her to give oral evidence to the Committee once the consultation on restructuring has closed. In [Cardiff University's response](#) (21 March 2025), it said:

For a number of the subjects which we are proposing to discontinue, most notably ancient history, modern languages and translation, music, and religious studies and theology, there is a significant and sustained drop in student demand. Fewer students are choosing to study these subjects to GCSE or A Level and this means that there is likely to be continued pressure on recruitment to those courses across Wales and the UK as a whole.

## 2. Culture, Welsh Language and Communication Committee inquiry

Between 2017 and 2018, the Fifth Senedd's Culture, Welsh Language and Communication Committee undertook an inquiry into [funding for and access to music services](#). In line with the Task and Finish Group's report, the Committee found that funding pressures had led to variability of access and provision between local authorities and that the current position was "fragile and fragmented".

Among the Committee's recommendations was that the Welsh Government should transfer responsibility for the delivery of music services to an arms-length, national body. It also recommended that the Welsh Government should prepare a National Action Plan for Music to provide strategic direction and ensure consistency throughout Wales. The Welsh Government accepted these recommendations in principle subject to the outcome of a feasibility study.

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## 3. Welsh Government action

### 3.1. Music in schools

The Welsh Government commissioned [Music Services Feasibility Study](#), was published in January 2020. This considered options for music delivery and the need for a National Plan for Music Education. The report suggested that a National Plan for Music Education could provide greater coherence and drive improvements. It suggested that an option for a national coordinating body or service, would introduce “a way of pooling and providing coherence to the use of governmental funding for Music Education Services”.

The Welsh Government published its [National Plan for Music Education](#) in May 2022. This sets out the Welsh Government priorities for music education. The programmes in the Plan include the First Experiences programme. This aims to give children in primary schools and other settings a minimum of half a term of musical instrument taster sessions. Secondary schools and other settings receive funding for experiences that aim to support young people's health and well-being and their progression to GCSE music.

As part of the National Plan for Music Education, the Welsh Government established the [National Music Service](#) with £13.5 million of funding provided to local authorities and their music services over three years (£4m in 2024-25). The National Music Service is responsible for implementing the [National Music Plan](#). The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) is the lead body, responsible for co-ordinating the activities of the service and its work programmes.

### 3.2. Higher education

In relation to higher education, in a Written Statement on 18 February 2025, Vikki Howells, the Minister for Further and Higher Education announced:

To support our universities, I have already increased the tuition fee cap for 2025/26, providing up to £21.9m in additional income to universities, and I have also provided an additional £10m in grant funding to the sector. In recognition of the significant financial challenges facing higher education, I am pleased to announce today a further £18.5m capital funding this financial year. This additional funding will support universities with estate maintenance and digital projects to reduce

operating costs, while also improving environmental sustainability and ensuring that facilities continue to be suitable for providing a high-quality student experience and delivering world-leading research. I have also asked Medr to report back to me on how this funding has been maximised to make future savings to ease the current financial challenges.

In a [Plenary debate on 5 February 2025](#) on Higher Education, the Minister for Further and Higher Education outlined the financial position of universities in Wales and highlighted that music can be studied at a number of other universities in Wales such as Bangor, the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, the Open University and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

## 4. Petitions Committee

There are currently two open Petitions relating to cuts to universities in Wales. Both relate to Cardiff University and both have passed the number of signatures required to be considered by the Petitions Committee:

- [Help Cardiff University to keep their Modern Languages degree courses](#)
- [Enable Cardiff University to keep the Nursing degree course](#)

Between 2019 and 2020, the Petitions Committee considered a Petition, [P-05-880 Wales is Rapidly Losing its Musical Reputation and Heritage](#). This called for the Welsh Government to produce an urgent National Plan for Music Education with dedicated central funding. As the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee was going to be monitoring further progress in relation to funding and delivery of music education services, the Petition was closed.

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.