

9 February 2021

Amgueddfa Cymru response to the Legacy inquiry by the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

As an organisation, we have greatly valued the work of the Committee. It has played the role of a critical friend to us as a national institution, rightly scrutinising us on our work and ensuring that we are delivering for the people of Wales. Many members of the committee have also taken an interest in our work, championing our achievements and making the case for greater investment and support from the Welsh Government to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of Amgueddfa Cymru.

We have had the opportunity to host members of the Committee at our sites on a number of occasions during the course of the Fifth Senedd, which included hosting a meeting of the Committee itself at St Fagans National Museum of History in November 2019 following the awarding of the Art Fund Museum of the Year prize to the museum earlier in that year.

The membership of the Committee changes frequently, and as a result, we have had the opportunity to engage with many different members of the Senedd. We have established a positive and constructive relationship with the Committee, regularly appearing before members on a range of different issues relating their remit. We have also valued the opportunity to provide evidence to numerous reviews undertaken by the Committee and respond to recommendations made for example *'Count me in! Tackling poverty and social exclusion through culture, heritage and the arts*. We look forward to working with members again during the Sixth Senedd.

What lessons can be learned from the experience of the Committee and its scrutiny of the portfolio in advance of the Sixth Senedd?

The breadth of the Committee's work has undoubtedly highlighted how integral culture is to Wales, and how passionately people feel about the issues it has considered over the course of the Fifth Senedd. It relates to so many different facets of our lives, clearly illustrating that culture plays a key economic role as well as supporting wellbeing and learning for life.

Though we have had a huge champion for both the arts and culture in the current Deputy Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport we do hope that culture will be part of a full Ministerial role in the Sixth Senedd, so that culture can be at the heart of all decisions taken by the Welsh Government. This would be in line with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, which makes culture a key pillar in sustainable development. We believe this would also help the committee in being able to scrutinise in greater depth at times the decisions taken by Welsh Government relating to culture.

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One area that the Committee could expand its work in the Sixth Senedd relates to greater scrutiny of budgets, and the financial sustainability of institutions such as Amgueddfa Cymru. As the Committee will be aware, Welsh Government announced only last week a support package of £6m to both ourselves and the National Library of Wales which has been greatly welcomed as it provides stability for 2021-22.

However, the long-term financial sustainability of Amgueddfa Cymru remains challenging. Though we have made significant progress in increasing our income generation activities and attracting funding for key areas of our work, including learning, the financial support from Welsh Government to support free entry to the national museums as well as to maintain and develop the national collections remains our main source of funding for both revenue and capital.

Further, the Committee could in the future look at how institutions such as Amgueddfa Cymru are funded by Welsh Government, and whether funding could or should also be provided from other budgets, beyond Culture, such as Education and Health, to support key programmes and activities that deliver on government priorities in these areas.

What have been the strengths and weaknesses of the Committee's remit including whether it enabled the Committee to work effectively?

The remit of the Committee has worked well, responding to key issues facing the cultural sector including the impact of Covid-19. It has also worked hard to try and engage the public in its work, including holding a vote on areas of work, which has undoubtedly helped raise its profile. We have also valued the reports and recommendations made by the Committee particularly when gathering evidence across sectors to look in depth at areas of work.

It has been a busy and packed agenda for the Committee, with a number of inquiries taking place at one time especially during the past year. Given that the membership of the Committee is small, it has seemed that capacity has been challenged at times and that therefore the Committee has not been able to delve as deep into some issues as it would have ideally wished to be able to do so.

Do you and your organisation have a view on the Committee's ways of working? Are there any new ways of working that could be adopted in future? You may wish to consider its approach to evidence-gathering, scrutiny of the Welsh Government, and new virtual ways of working.

As mentioned in the introduction to this response, a positive step taken by the Committee was to hold some of its meetings outside of the Senedd, including at St Fagans National Museum of History. The Committee has also undertaken a number of visits to the national museums, which has allowed us to showcase our partnership

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work as well as some of the challenges we face, for instance the barriers to improving access to National Museum Cardiff and to upgrade the stores. By visiting, the Committee has been able to better understand some of the issues we have discussed with them at more formal evidence sessions, which in turn has members advocates on our behalf when they have scrutinised Ministers, including the Deputy Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport. We would hope that post Covid-19 such visits can remain a key part of the Committee's approach to both scrutiny and engagement, as well as evidence gathering.

Also as mentioned above, the Committee's membership has changed frequently during the course of the Senedd with very few members remaining on the Committee for more than two years. We have therefore welcomed the opportunity to be able to submit updates on our work to the Committee prior to each appearance, meaning that Members who are not as familiar with our work can be brought up to speed on key issues.