

Eluned Morgan MS
First Minister
Welsh Government
BY EMAIL

7th August 2024

Dear First Minister,

Congratulations on your appointment as First Minister, which coincides with this year's National Eisteddfod. While people from across Wales gather in Pontypridd to celebrate Welsh culture and language, we are writing to you as the Wales Federation of Entertainment Unions to express our deep concerns regarding the future of the arts, culture, and media across our nation. We represent the country's writers, musicians, performers, actors, dancers, journalists and backstage media professionals, and know from our work with members that there are serious threats to professional jobs in the creative industries, as well as provision for audiences of all types across Wales.

You have promised to listen to the public, that the people of Wales will set the agenda for you, and that your election is about turning a new page, and we hope that culture and the creative industries will be part of this. We recognise that the Welsh Government is facing significant pressures, but wish to point out that, at the same time as the Welsh Government is consulting on its draft Priorities for Culture in Wales up to 2030, culture in Wales and our national cultural institutions are currently under threat from a variety of serious conditions.

These problems include significant cuts to funding from national and local government, from the arts councils (the Arts Council of Wales has suffered a real terms budget reduction of around 37% since 2010), the Books Council of Wales and other bodies over the last 14 years. The ongoing effects of, and slow recovery from, the Covid pandemic, high energy prices and the cost of living crisis together with poor infrastructure, issues with arts education in schools and poor working conditions are also taking their toll. Our members are also facing issues with technology, such as the emergence and rapid development and use of AI. Collectively, these circumstances are posing unprecedented challenges to both established and experienced professionals, as well as younger talent aspiring to contribute to Wales' creative landscape in the future.

Specific examples of problems for our sector include redundancies and proposals to remove the full time orchestra and chorus at Welsh National Opera, and the closure of the Young RWCMD so the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama will be the only conservatoire in the UK without a regular junior programme; more than half of the UK's film and TV workforce being out of work; high running costs for the venues that performers rely on; the closure of St David's Hall and possibly other venues like the Blackwood Miners' Institute; the closure of Welsh magazines Planet and New Welsh Review; issues with funding for Welsh language news websites Golwg 360 and Corgi; reductions to S4C's

funding (with subsequent cuts to important programmes such as Pobol y Cwm); and the BBC licence fee freeze. There are also issues in Welsh Government which we hope you will address, such as the recent artificial division between culture (including oversight of the Arts Council of Wales) and the creative sector (including Creative Wales), and the confusion this has caused in relation to issues such as broadcasting.

A modern, thriving, and forward-looking nation, especially the "Land of Song", needs more than just basic health and social services – it needs art, culture, creativity and media for the value they bring to the economy, education, health and wellbeing of people across Wales. This is something about which the public are concerned - thousands of people have signed petitions in support of organisations such as Welsh National Opera and Young RWCMD. Wales was one of the first countries to take action to protect the interests of Future Generations, but the current situation is putting future generations' access to culture and media under threat.

Wales needs a strategy for culture and the creative industries that values and protects our national institutions, values and champions professionals and aspiring talent in the sector, underlines the right to fair pay and working conditions on union collective agreements, and which focuses on long-term investment and sustainable objectives.

We would like to meet you urgently to discuss these issues further, and explore alternative solutions and ways forward for some of these serious challenges facing our sector.

Yours sincerely



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On behalf of
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