

CCWLSIR IIC 07

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau

Rhyngwladol | Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Effaith costau cynyddol / Impact of increasing costs

Ymateb gan Unigolyn / Response from Individual

The arts and culture sector in Wales - coming out of covid, under Brexit and with the climate and cost of living crises - is incredibly fragile. Freelancers and workers have left the sector, especially those most impacted by covid closures (as they could not work their usual roles eg lighting designers, choreographers), and those able to jump to other sectors/industries have too (eg marketing, technical). It's harder and harder to find freelance crews and creative teams, and employees, through recruitment for these reasons.

Pay has been low and should have been slowly improving but inflation and other pressures (eg standstill financial settlements) will mean pay rises are hard to achieve. The sector is financially fragile - lots of late bookings, lack of public confidence and cash, high numbers of no-shows so no secondary income on bars etc, illness in teams, roles hard to fill.

Arts and culture are central not only to Wales' devolved government portfolio, but crucially also the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. They also contribute hugely to the wider the economy of the country e.g. via tourism, supply chains, leisure spending etc and bring wide social and educational benefits to people - as workers, as freelancers and creatives, as audiences and participants.

We have been incredibly grateful for the Welsh Govt Cultural Recovery Fund and within that also the Freelancer Fund (and the supporting work of the Public Sector and Freelancer Pledge taskgroup) but that funding all finished in March 22 but this autumn/winter and beyond will be incredibly difficult for all.

Consequences and interventions

As far as I understand, Welsh Govt has already invested £100m in keeping the sector going during covid - I'd argue more new and additional cash needs to be found to shore up those who are most fragile and struggling including freelancers, smaller project funded companies, companies, venues in winter22/spring23 and beyond, possibly even into 2024 when ACW's new portfolio of revenue clients is invested.

Without new and additional support, at best, services will be drastically reduced (e.g. reduced opening hours, lower levels of touring/shows, etc) having an impact on the economy, working lives, and the benefit for publics. At worst, I think there will be more losses of workforce from the sector, more permanent closures of companies and venues, with many impacts felt across the sector, including in terms of delivery for audiences and participants.

Given all these crises are interlinked, it's hard to see what one solution to say business energy rates would do. The arts and culture sector in Wales - coming out of covid, under Brexit and with the climate and cost of living crises - is incredibly fragile and urgently needs new and additional support. The people most impacted will be those with protected characteristics and of a lower socioeconomic status - precarious freelance workers, and those losing access to a warm public space this winter or missing out on attending groups/sessions as elderly people or new parents, etc.

We have been so appreciative of the crucial Welsh Govt intervention in terms of the Cultural Recovery Fund and esp the Freelance Fund and supporting work done by the Public Sector and Freelancer Pledge task group. My strongest concern is that all this shoring up will be lost if no new and additional money is found to support the sector from winter22 onwards, poss even as far as spring 2024 - for freelancers, for ACW revenue clients and project funded companies, for the sector.

Finally, if Welsh Govt also intends to create a new cultural strategy this year, that would imply a desire for the sector to thrive and succeed through this most difficult times to keep delivering for the country and its people in future. The new cultural strategy in and of itself will also need sectoral engagement to support its creation, and then new and additional resource to implement the plans, going beyond what I've laid out above.