



P-04-639 To protect the future of Youth Music in Wales – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 10 June 2015

Dear William Powell AM – Chair of National Assembly for Wales Petitions committee,

Petition: To protect the future of Youth Music in Wales

Thank you for the opportunity of meeting with members of the committee today at the handover of our petition. Thank you also for forwarding the initial reply from Huw Lewis AM in his capacity as Minister for Education and Skills. We welcome this opportunity to work with all concerned to gain the best outcome for Youth Music for future generations in Wales. Please see our response to the Minister's initial letter below.

We are aware of the current arrangements for the funding for education through local authorities, in particular arrangements for music service tuition. This currently has the potential for all twenty two authorities to create their own very individual but differing scenarios. It is for this reason that we are calling for a national strategy which will remove all such anomalies in the provision of professional instrumental tuition through schools. This would lead to the parity of provision referred to in the minister's response. This alone, however, does not ensure that funding for music is channelled towards professional music lessons provided by LA run services as many are now turning to cheaper independent agencies as a way to providing tuition. The authority has no jurisdiction over these agencies in terms of quality control and this is a great concern. Under current arrangements all authorities encouraged music services to transfer money to schools' budgets. This has had a very positive effect until recently where evidence is now suggesting that

schools are using this money to cover shortfalls in areas of their budget other than music. It is for this reason that we ask for ring-fencing to be re-established.

We welcome that new ways of working are being considered and look forward to the findings of the Task and Finish group being presented. We are also hopeful of receiving more details of the methodology used in this process and a copy of the report.

Our reasons for bringing the petition forward are that, since the last review of Music Services published in 2010, Wales has seen a sharp decline in music provision through schools, inconsistency within schools and local authorities, as well as loss of performance opportunities fed by this. Our concern is that this may only be the start of a potential identity crisis for Wales, once regarded as a musical nation. Music is an intrinsic part of everyday life, but without protection, it is not a guaranteed part of the future landscape of Wales. Organisations such as the National Orchestra of Wales rely on young people discovering and nurturing their talent, having a chance to learn and early opportunities to perform. Music has the power to transform lives in many other ways. Wales had the first National Youth Orchestra in the world. We need to ensure that Wales is not the first country to experience the demise of such an illustrious organisation.

We would urge that Wales looks at lessons learned in England and Scotland where cuts in music education are being reversed in order to give children the undisputed opportunities and benefits that music brings, halting the idea of music as elitist.

We are heartened that the 'Successful Futures' review shows that Welsh Government is putting the rights of the child at the heart of the curriculum. We hope that this will be extended to include putting instrumental lessons at

the heart of learning, allowing each child to discover their talents and develop their potential to the full, regardless of background or postcode.

Whilst we see merit in the Lead Creative Schools scheme, this would be additional to, not a substitute for a sustained, continuous progressive and positive experience of instrumental learning to ensure the future of Wales as a musical nation. The benefits of music are closely aligned with the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, as identified in the 'Wales we want' conversation. We ask that action be taken now to safeguard the future of youth music and make a real difference to the future of Wales.

We hope that our petition will be taken forward and look forward to assisting in any way we can.

Yours sincerely,

Jeff Ryan

Lead petitioner

Friends of Bridgend Youth Music