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MWT/MLW

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For the Attention of the Finance Committee Members

### **WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL**

Committee members will be aware of the reduction by 10.6% of the Welsh Books Council grant announced by the Welsh Government. This means a loss of over £374K from its existing budget of £3,526,000.

Government support over the past decade has enabled the Council to develop into a thoroughly bilingual and bicultural body that has succeeded, in collaboration with its many partners, in reaching out to reading communities across both the social and the geographical spectrum. It has successfully supplemented traditional printed texts with e-book production, has stimulated strong market growth of books of Welsh interest, has nurtured the talents of writers, and has enabled the publication of a colourful range of children's books both in Welsh and in English. In short, it has enabled the creation for the first time in Wales of a small but vibrant publishing economy.

And it is precisely because virtually the whole of the book industry in Wales is currently reliant on the WBC grant that a reduction in funding of the magnitude announced has understandably aroused the very greatest concern in communities across the country. The scale of the cut is all the more perplexing to all since it is twice that suffered by several major cognate bodies serving the Arts and Culture sector here in Wales.

Faced by such a challenge, the WBC will have no choice but to undertake a radical review of all its funding programmes. And while the Council will of course make strenuous efforts to avoid job losses in the wake of the prospective reorganization of its activities, it may prove possible only to minimise rather than totally prevent such a deeply unfortunate outcome. At present, it is estimated that the work-force within the publishing sector totals around 1,000 including publishers and booksellers as well as editors and designers and a number of these posts will be under threat if the cuts are confirmed.

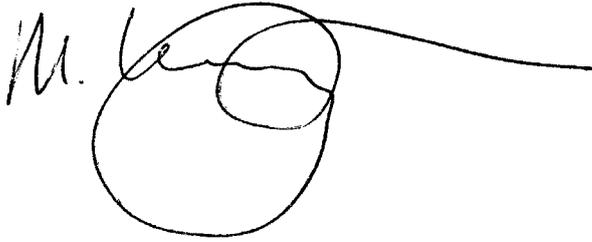
It is primarily in connection with this latter unwelcome prospect that I am writing to you. A very large number of the small businesses dependent on WBC financial support are located in communities (many of them rural) where it would be extremely difficult to find suitable alternative employment. And given the fragility of the local economy in such communities, any job losses would be sure to have significant knock-on effects throughout the entire neighbourhood.

I would also like to underline the impact that the proposed cuts will have on the Welsh Language with a reduction in the number of books published and especially so in the provision for children.



I would therefore respectfully request that the Finance Committee members consider the above points as you scrutinise the recommendations made in the draft budget.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Wynn Thomas'. The signature is stylized, with a large, circular loop at the end of the name.

M. WYNN THOMAS  
Chairman