

Senedd Cymru / Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu / Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

Ymchwiliad i'r achosion o COVID-19 ac effaith y feirws ar ddiwylliant, y diwydiannau creadigol, treftadaeth, cyfathrebu a chwaraeon / Inquiry into the COVID-19 outbreak and its impact on culture, creative industries, heritage, communications and sport

CWLC COV04

Ymateb gan Rhwydwaith Radio Gymunedol CYMRU/ Response from WALES Community Radio Network

**Rhwydwaith Radio Gymunedol CYMRU
WALES Community Radio Network**

7th May, 2020,

Dear Senedd Member,

Emergency Covid 19 Funding for Welsh Community Radio Stations

We, the undersigned, collectively forming the Wales Community Radio Network, write to express our grave concerns over the state of and financial risk to our sector.

All are licensed not for profit broadcasters, severely affected by the financial crisis caused by Covid 19.

We provide skilled, targeted, local programming to the communities we serve, largely delivered by volunteer broadcasters; above all we provide social gain, a requirement measured and costed into our performance criteria, a benefit to the communities in which we live.

Whilst our volunteers have been severely affected by the lock down, in most cases restricting our activities, services and ability to deliver programme content, all stations have continued to broadcast, delivering highly valued items of news and information. The collapse in revenue from advertising is causing great distress. The cancellation of pre-booked advertising has had a catastrophic impact. All stations are faced with essential costs, including wages, rent, Ofcom fees, licence fees, insurances, energy, maintenance, and the general overheads required to be met in any business. Most have had to incur the additional burden to purchase remote broadcasting equipment.

Since the lock down has been in place, community radio stations have been preparing mission critical safety information in the form of radio bulletins and key messages to LOCAL populations across Wales. This has helped save lives, educate and inform people, and pass on essential information from Public Services and the Welsh Government.

This cannot and should not be underestimated, particularly when the circulation of local and regional newspapers is in decline, and other communication channels limited. Particular respect must be given to the elderly who turn to local radio as a valuable means of local information.

Whilst we are volunteer driven, we pay for the privilege of broadcasting to serve our communities in areas defined by Ofcom, as being in need of localised broadcasting services. Other than occasional grants, we are not supported by them financially in any way at all. They do, however, provide a regulatory framework with which we are required to comply or face fines, suspension or

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loss of the license.

We URGENTLY need financial support.

We URGENTLY need financial support from the WELSH Government for WELSH Community radio stations, owned, licensed, operating, and servicing communities IN WALES.

This provision is required over and above any provision that may be made or distributed across the UK, wherein limited funds may have to be spread across up to 300 community radio broadcasters in Britain, and of which a small proportion only are located in Wales.

Our plea to you, and the Assembly Government, is for assistance to keep our sector alive. We provide a highly valued and hyper local delivery of news, information, and in these dark times entertainment to our communities, warmly received by all. We cannot shoulder this burden alone, and due to the structure of our industry are unable to qualify for the grant aid and assistance available to the wider business community. We would wish to develop our relationship with the Assembly, and have it recognise more precisely the work that we do, but above all we need financial assistance to survive.

We need YOUR help to enable us to continue with the important next steps as we come out of lock down and into recovery. Time is not on our side.

We cannot stress enough the need for help, by way of grant and advertising revenues from the Assembly to get us through these difficult times, enabling us to continue to serve our communities and the aspirations they have every day of the year.

We ask you as members and task you as representatives for assistance to our sector.

We welcome greatly the help you may give us.

We look forward to your assistance and support.

In all sincerity,

The Wales Community Radio Network

David Hanson, Station Director, **Tudno FM**

Lee Cole, Station Manager, **Rhondda Radio**

Harold Martin, Radio Consultant, **MônFM Community Radio**

Donna Zammut, Station Manager, **Radio Cardiff**

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WALES Community Radio Network

Tony Wyn Jones, Station Director, **MônFM**

Amy Hughes, Station Editor, **Calon FM**

Michael Lewis, Station Director, **Radio Tircoed**

Nathan Spackman, Operations Director, **Bro Radio**

Stephen Bower, Station Director, **BGFM Radio**

Steve Johnson, **University of South Wales**