

IFRCS04 Dr Bethan Gordon, Dean of the Cardiff Met School of Art & Design

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

[Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol | Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee](#)

[Effaith Gostyngiadau Cyllid ar Ddiwylliant a Chwaraeon | Impact of Funding Reductions for Culture and Sport](#)

Ymateb gan: Dr Bethan Gordon, Deon Ysgol Celf a Dylunio Caerdydd | Evidence from: Dr Bethan Gordon, Dean of the Cardiff School of Art & Design

Cardiff School Art & Design was established in 1865. Our courses include animation, architecture, fashion, fine art, game art, interior design, photography and product design. The most recent UK-wide assessment of research (REF2021) rated 84% of our research as world-leading or internationally excellent. We ranked joint second for impact, demonstrating the cultural, social and economic value of our work. Our alumni include some of the most notable names in Welsh art and design.

Funding reductions for culture risk hurting future student recruitment and graduate opportunities. The vibrancy of the sector in Wales, particularly its infrastructure, is a draw for applicants wishing to develop during their studies and secure employment after graduation. Any damage to the sector could make Wales a less appealing location of study, which would then exacerbate the situation with talent drain.

1. What impacts has reduced funding had on your organisation and sector so far?

- There has been a noticeable downturn in activity across the sector in the last few years with reduced funding having widespread impacts. Taking the National Theatre Wales as an example, the budget cuts have narrowed opportunities for writers, actors, production staff, musicians, graphic designers and others, many of whom work on a freelance basis. Their loss of work represents a loss of income and associated spending power.
-

- The impact on the School of Art & Design relates to the softer factors that influence student recruitment and graduate opportunities. With regards to recruitment, Cardiff's vibrant creative sector is an important draw. It not only gives students access to worldleading creative works, but also provides an infrastructure within which they are able to showcase their own work during their studies. The closure of small venues has the greatest impact on student and graduate opportunities outside of the University.
- Cardiff has traditionally retained a significant number of creative industries graduates who choose to start their careers in Wales. Despite the disproportionate impact of Covid-19, hundreds of enterprises enter the creative industries in Wales every year and it remains one of the fastest growing sectors in Wales.¹
- As a result, a network of support has been created with more established organisations providing opportunities for emerging talent. Failure to support this infrastructure risks a talent drain, where graduates are forced to leave Wales to further their careers.
- In the most recent creative industry survey for Welsh Government, the top three factors for businesses finding difficulty in retaining staff and filling gaps were “thought to be due to people moving away from Wales for employment, skills gaps, and competition from other companies”.²
- Welsh Government acknowledges the impact of skills gaps and the need to ensure these can be filled by further and higher education.³ Given the importance of placements, funding cuts will reduce the opportunities for graduates to fill these gaps.

¹ Fodor, M. M., Komorowski, M. and Lewis, J. 2023. [Clwstwr Creative Industries Report NO 1.3 – Report Update: The Size and Composition of the Creative Industries in Wales in 2022 \(Building Resilience after COVID-19\)](#). Cardiff: Clwstwr.

² Welsh Government. 2024. [Creative Wales Industry Survey: 2023](#). Cardiff: Welsh Government.

³ Welsh Government. 2024. [Draft Priorities for Culture in Wales 2024 to 2030](#). Cardiff: Welsh Government. ⁴ Welsh Government. 2024. [Creative Wales Industry Survey: 2023](#). Cardiff: Welsh Government.

2. What measures have you taken in light of it, such as changing what you do and how you do it.

- We are exploring alternative modes of support for our graduates, looking for funding to support artists in residence in our studios and examining models for offering graduate incubation opportunities. We continue to engage with existing programmes of support, such as Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), for graduate employment.
- KTPs, part-funded by Welsh Government, see recent graduates placed in organisations to transfer knowledge from a university. In recent years, we have run KTPs with a focus on sustainable design practices with firms in Neath and Flintshire, providing the graduate with invaluable experience and boosting the companies' growth. A current KTP in Rhondda Cynon Taf is applying the sustainable design expertise to pursue net-zero decarbonisation in social housing.

3. To what extent will these impacts be irreversible (e.g. venues closing, or specialist skills being lost rather than a temporary restriction in activities)?

- Cutting budgets invariably leads to a reduction in the availability of work, which itself risks creating a talent drain, particularly amongst young people, of those unable to find work in Wales. Once people have left and established their lives elsewhere, it can be harder to attract talent back. As above, the creative industry survey reported concerns that talent drain is already happening.⁴
- Any drain is significant because of the contribution the creative industries make to the Welsh economy. The estimated total turnover of Wales's creative industries hit a record high of £4.2bn in 2022, comprising 4.6% of total turnover in Wales.⁴ As per Welsh Government, the creative industries have also been one of the fastest growing parts of the Welsh economy for several years.⁵

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Welsh Government. 2020. [Priorities for the Creative Industries Sector](#). Cardiff: Welsh Government.

- Moreover, the creative industries have been shown to generate spillover effects.⁶ The Design Council identifies four types of creative industries spillovers:⁷
 - i. Industry spillovers, where supply chain spending is triggered.
 - ii. Knowledge spillovers, where new ideas spread to other sectors, catalysing innovation and improving other sectors' ability to absorb innovation.
 - iii. Supply-side effects, where a facility or place attracts skilled workers and visitors, creating a virtuous circle that increases the value of that facility or place.
 - iv. Innovation effects with the creation of new knowledge in product and services.
- These spillovers can have a direct impact on employment in other industries. Research conducted in 2021 into the multiplier effect of creative businesses over the last 20 years suggests that each creative job can generate 1.9 new jobs in the wider economy.⁸ Failing to invest in the creative sector in Wales could negatively impact supply chains, the creation of new products and services, tourism and more.
- Similarly, the creative industries are known for innovating to help society to address major challenges in areas like health and wellbeing, the preservation of cultural heritage and memory, and climate change. This is often achieved by working in partnership with other sectors; if lost, this could reduce innovation from Wales overall. For example, our design teams have supported the creation of new products in, amongst others, the finance, medical, film & television sectors.
- As Welsh Government states, “the sector doesn't just create jobs and wealth – it contributes to a strong national brand and helps to promote Wales and its culture and talent to the world”.⁹ The value of the creative

⁶ Frontier Economics. 2023. [*Creative Spillovers: do the Creative Industries Benefit Firms in the Wider Economy?*](#). London: Frontier Economics.

⁷ Crawford, N. and Dewfield, S. 2022. [*A Design Sprint for the Creative Industries Sector Vision: Maximising the Spillover Value of the Creative Industries to the Wider Economy*](#). London: Design Council.

⁸ Gutierrez-Posada, D. et al. 2021. [*Do creative industries generate multiplier effects? Evidence from UK cities, 1997-2018*](#). Newcastle and London: Creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre.

⁹ Welsh Government. 2020. [*Priorities for the Creative Industries Sector*](#). Cardiff: Welsh Government.

industries extends beyond the economy, providing “the news that informs our democracy, the designs that shape our cities and the content and performances that enrich our lives and strengthen our global image”.¹⁰ Losing these spaces will be hard to recover.

- Reducing budgets results in conservative, low-risk approaches to investment. At a time when AI is disrupting the industry, workforces are undergoing demographic shifts, environmental and other major global challenges are facing society, failing to support higher-risk, blue-skies R&D could leave Wales behind.

4. What interventions would you like to see from the Welsh Government, beyond increased funding?

- The creative industries are reliant on a large freelance workforce, with between 30% and 50% of the creative workforce self-employed in the UK.¹¹ Opportunities for upskilling, not only in primary areas of expertise but also areas like business skills, advertising, and research and development are likely to improve the sustainability and profitability of the creative economy.
- Access to innovation funding could be amended. Several funding streams requiring match-funding or direct investment from businesses, which can be prohibitive for self-employed and micro-businesses. Welsh Government could also support the development of industry standards around working conditions, employment hours, bullying and harassment to improve recruitment and retention.
- The creative industries have been valued insufficiently by successive UK governments, so Welsh Government and others should continue to advocate for the creative industries by improving the rhetoric around the creative industries and championing their impacts.¹² The negative attitude has made it harder for those in the creative industries to charge

¹⁰ UK Government. 2023. [Creative Industries Sector Vision: A joint plan to drive growth, build talent and develop skills](#). London: UK Government.

¹¹ Fodor, M. M., Komorowski, M. and Lewis, J. 2023. [Clwstwr Creative Industries Report NO 1.3 – Report Update: The Size and Composition of the Creative Industries in Wales in 2022 \(Building Resilience after COVID-19\)](#). Cardiff: Clwstwr.

¹² House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee. 2023. [At risk: our creative future](#). London: UK Parliament.

appropriately for their work and made it less of 'an attractive career option.

- Recent years has seen talk of 'rip-off' and 'low-value' art degrees and money moved away from the arts in higher education in England.^{13 14 15} The tone of public debate affects perception across the UK, and the loss of expertise in England has a detrimental effect on the ability to recruit talent and expertise into Wales. The narrative on the value of arts and humanities degrees can and should be countered.¹⁶

5. To what extent do the impacts you describe fall differently on people with protected characteristics and people of a lower socioeconomic status?

- There is a lack of diversity in the creative sector.¹⁷ Support for those with lower socioeconomic status to join the creative workforce is vital. It can be harder for people with a lower socioeconomic status to enter the arts because they do not have the resources to work for free, often presented as a necessity when developing a profile.
- The long working hours can be prohibitive for people with caring responsibilities who wish to enter or return to the creative industries workforce. As above, Welsh Government could engage with industry standards or guidance.
- It is also worth noting the attainment gaps seen at GCSE level in Wales, with the most disadvantaged students many months being the advantaged. In 2019, the gap was 23.3 months in the expressive arts, 19.2 months in design and technology, and 17.7 months in art and design.¹⁸

¹³ UK Government. 2023. [Crackdown on rip-off university degrees](#). London: UK Government.

¹⁴ Behr, A. 2024. [UK's creative industries bring in more revenue than cars, oil and gas - so why is arts education facing cuts?](#). London: Conversation.

¹⁵ Parr, C. 2024. [Government increases Strategic Priorities Grant by just £2m](#). London: Research Professional.

¹⁶ Marsden, R. and Plassart, A. 2024. [Changing the narrative: Valuing Arts and Humanities degrees](#). Cardiff: Open University, History UK and Learned Society of Wales.

¹⁷ Comunian, R. et al. 2023. [Making the Creative Majority: A report for the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Creative Diversity on 'What Works' to support diversity and inclusion in creative education and the talent pipeline, with a focus on the 16+ age category](#). London: UK Parliament.

¹⁸ Cardim-Dias, J. and Sibieta, L. 2022. [Inequalities in GCSE results across England and Wales](#). London: Education Policy Institute.

Any damage to the creative sector is unlikely to redress that imbalance, which will need security to counteract inequalities.
