

## **IFRCS09 Timothy Payne, Personal Capacity**

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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: Timothy Payne, Sail Personol | Evidence from: Timothy Payne, Personal Capacity

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

Reduced funding has had several significant impacts on the Pembroke Dock Heritage Centre and the wider heritage sector:

- **Financial Strain:** The Centre is facing severe financial pressure due to the reduction in funding from the Pembroke Dock Town Council and the cessation of the Welsh Government Cost-of-Living grant. The annual grant from the Town Council has been halved from £6,000 to £3,000, and the termination of the Cost-of-Living grant has left the Centre without a crucial source of unrestricted funding. This has led to an overall deficit in the Centre's financial outlook for the year.
  - **Extended Closure Period:** Due to escalating running costs, particularly heating expenses, the Centre has extended its normal closure period from six weeks to over three months (November 2024 to February 2025). This extended closure has resulted in no income from admissions during this period, while core expenses such as rent, salaries, maintenance, and utilities continue to accrue.
  - **Deferred Maintenance:** The Centre, housed in a Grade 2 listed Georgian chapel, is unable to afford necessary exterior repairs and decorations due to limited funds. The inability to maintain the building is causing deterioration, which could lead to further costs and potential safety issues.
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- **Reduction in Staffing:** The cut in funding has forced the Centre to make the difficult decision not to recruit a replacement part-time Centre Coordinator. This reduction in staffing places additional strain on the remaining volunteers and limits the Centre's operational capacity.
- **Decrease in Visitor Numbers and Revenue:** The cost-of-living crisis has led to a decrease in visitor numbers, as people have less disposable income to spend on museum visits, gift shop purchases, and charitable donations. This has further strained the Centre's financial resources.
- **Potential Closure:** If the financial situation does not improve, the Centre may face closure. This would not only result in the loss of a significant cultural and historical resource for the community but would also have a negative economic impact on the local area, which benefits from the Centre being a major tourist attraction.

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

In response to the reduced funding and financial pressures, the Pembroke Dock Heritage Centre has implemented several measures:

- **Extended Closure Period:** To reduce operating costs, the Centre has extended its usual winter closure from six weeks to over three months. This measure is intended to save on heating and other utilities during the colder months when operating costs are higher.
    - **Reliance on Reserves:** The Centre has had to rely on its financial reserves to cover the deficit. However, this is not a sustainable long-term solution, as reserves are finite and intended for emergencies rather than regular operations.
    - **No Recruitment of Replacement Staff:** The Centre has decided not to replace the part-time Centre Coordinator to save on salary costs. While this reduces immediate expenses, it increases the workload on volunteers and could impact the Centre's ability to operate effectively.
    - **Scaling Back on Maintenance and Repairs:** Due to limited funds, necessary repairs and maintenance on the Georgian chapel housing the Centre have been deferred, leading to deterioration of the building and grounds.
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- **Increased Volunteer Reliance:** The Centre has continued to rely heavily on its cadre of over 60 volunteers, many of whom are elderly and help manage daily operations, fundraising, and other essential tasks.

**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)?**

The impacts could be significantly irreversible if the current financial challenges are not addressed:

- **Potential Permanent Closure:** If the Centre continues to operate at a deficit and exhausts its reserves, it may face permanent closure. This would result in the loss of a key cultural and historical asset for the community and the wider region.
- **Loss of Specialist Skills and Knowledge:** The Centre's volunteers, many of whom are elderly, possess unique knowledge and skills related to Pembroke Dock's heritage and the museum's collection. A closure or reduction in operations could lead to a loss of this expertise, which may not be recoverable if these individuals are no longer available.
- **Deterioration of Historic Building:** The ongoing inability to fund essential repairs to the Georgian chapel could lead to significant deterioration, potentially making the building unusable in the future. Restoration costs could become prohibitively high, resulting in a permanent loss of the venue.
- **Negative Impact on Community and Volunteer Well-being:** The Centre serves as a social hub for volunteers and local groups, including those with elderly or vulnerable members. The closure could exacerbate issues such as loneliness and mental health problems, particularly among older individuals who rely on the Centre for social interaction.

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

Beyond increased funding, several interventions from the Welsh Government could help mitigate the impacts of reduced funding and support the Centre's sustainability:

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- **Support for Maintenance and Repairs:** Provide grants or subsidies specifically aimed at preserving and maintaining historic buildings, such as the Georgian chapel housing the Centre. This would help address deferred maintenance and prevent further deterioration.
- **Energy Efficiency Grants:** Offer funding or incentives for energy efficiency improvements, such as better insulation or more efficient heating systems. This could help reduce the Centre's operational costs, particularly during colder months.
- **Training and Capacity Building:** Fund training programmes for volunteers and staff to build skills in fundraising, digital marketing, and other areas that could help the Centre diversify its income streams and strengthen its financial position.
- **Support for Community Engagement Initiatives:** Develop programs or partnerships to support museums and heritage centres in creating community engagement activities that draw in local audiences and increase foot traffic, even during challenging economic times.
- **Facilitate Partnerships and Sponsorships:** Act as a facilitator to connect heritage centres with potential corporate sponsors or philanthropic organizations that may be interested in supporting cultural and historical preservation efforts.

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

The impacts of reduced funding and potential closure of the Pembroke Dock Heritage Centre are likely to disproportionately affect people with protected characteristics and those of lower socioeconomic status:

- **Elderly and Vulnerable Individuals:** Many of the Centre's volunteers are elderly and may rely on the Centre for social interaction, mental stimulation, and a sense of purpose. The Centre's closure would particularly affect these individuals, potentially leading to increased loneliness, depression, and other mental health issues.
  - **People with Disabilities:** The Centre hosts groups like the History Memory Group for Alzheimer's sufferers and their carers. The loss of this supportive environment could have a severe impact on those living with
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disabilities and their caregivers, reducing access to valuable social and educational resources.

- **Low-Income Individuals:** As the Centre is a free or low-cost venue, it provides affordable cultural and educational opportunities to people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The closure would limit access to such opportunities, disproportionately impacting those who cannot afford to travel to or pay for more expensive cultural experiences.

**6. Do you have any other points you wish to raise within the scope of this inquiry?**

The reduced funding and financial challenges facing the Pembroke Dock Heritage Centre have had wide-ranging impacts, including financial strain, operational cutbacks, and potential long-term damage to the Centre and its community. Targeted interventions from the Welsh Government and other stakeholders could help mitigate these impacts and support the Centre's continued operation.