

## **IFRCS17 Owain Jones, Leisure Manager, Isle of Anglesey County Council**

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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: Owain Jones, Rheolwr Hamdden, Cyngor Sir Ynys Môn | Evidence from: Owain Jones, Leisure Manager, Isle of Anglesey County Council

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

The Leisure budget was significantly reduced by up to 60% in 2017. This was mainly due to the outsourcing of parks and facilities which are now managed by Town and Community Councils. There was also a staff re-structure at management level that contributed towards savings. The impact of reduced budgets has created its challenges which include:

- Difficulty in maintaining standards.
- Reduced participation opportunities.
- Public dissatisfaction.
- Failure to meet customer expectations.
- A deterioration in levels of poverty and quality of life.
- Increase in demands on health services.
- A reduction in staff morale, commitment and confidence.
- A deterioration in the levels of health and wellbeing.
- Difficult to invest in buildings and new equipment.

Anglesey's Leisure Centres are ageing buildings, mostly built in the 1970's and 80's. Reduced budgets have significantly impacted on being able to modernise our centres. Repairs and maintenance costs have significantly increased. The authority

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is becoming more dependable on external grant funding to invest in these buildings, however due to the high level of applications for various sources of funding it has become increasingly more difficult to successfully apply for funding. The authority has set a target of becoming Net Zero by 2030, this provides a significant challenge for our Leisure Centres without further investment.

Staff retention has also become difficult across the Leisure Function, especially those that are on annual contracts funded through external funding. Due to reduced budgets teams have become smaller and therefore work programmes reduced along with the provision of what's available for our communities. Achieving targets has become challenging with less focus and time given towards different schemes. Sources of external funding have remained the same or reduced for a number of years with no consideration provided towards increase in public sector pay awards

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

- Setting a management commercial approach in how the Leisure Function operates, to increase income and reduce expenditure.
  - Increase in the number of external grant applications.
  - Improve our software systems to improve our customer experience.
  - Re-develop the Leisure brand and work with clubs and groups to utilise more of our facilities.
  - Changes have been made to the staffing structure and reducing staffing levels to a minimum.
  - Continuous review of staff shift patterns.
  - Annual increase on our fees and charges.
  - The Leisure Function is currently undertaking a review, looking at further efficiency savings for 2024/25 and 2025/26.
  - Members of staff are being asked to do more (outside their normal working duties).
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- Number of instructors have reduced creating longer waiting lists, which can have a further negative effect on the health service.

**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)?**

- All Outdoor facilities have been outsourced to Town or Community Councils or closed.
- One Leisure Centre was outsourced in 2013.
- Lack of investment creates a lower team morale and staff look for work elsewhere....a continuous cycle.
- Short term contracts for staff that are externally funded. Annual contracts where valuable and experienced members of staff look for work elsewhere after 12 months.
- Level of pay better elsewhere.
- Reduced opening hours for our Leisure Centres.

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

- Longer term contracts and not annual contracts. More stability is required.
- Increase in Capital investment in our leisure centres.
- Investment in new facilities in order to host major events, creating income and sustainability.

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

- National Exercise Referral Scheme – reduced budgets result in less people benefiting from the programme and longer waiting lists which as a result increases pressure on the health service.
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- Disability Sport Wales - budget cuts, no specific officer working directly within the local authority.
- Free Swim – budget cut / impact on over 60's and having to reduce the provision.
- Reduction in community programmes targeting specific areas.
- Price increase impacts on participation levels.
- Buildings are not all fit for purpose, making them less accessible to all.

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