

IFRCS24 Professor Frank Banks, Personal Capacity

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: Yr Athro Frank Banks, Sail Personol | Evidence from: Professor Frank Banks, Personal Capacity

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

Before Covid, the local County authority and the Local Town Council were in a position to support Wyeside Arts Centre in Builth Wells. This is no longer possible. Arts Council Wales (ACW) investment review in September 2023 could only offer one-fifth of what is necessary to allow the Arts Centre to survive. Consequently the Arts Centre was in danger of closing. Local people came to the rescue and enabled the Centre to continue for one more year. ACW also responded with a 'Create' grant. There is no certainty that ACW will respond in the future and the surprisingly generous local 'emergency' response will not be available again.

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

Using a 'Shared Prosperity Fund' (levelling up money) grant Wyeside has employed short-term an Arts Business Consultant, A Fundraiser' and continued the contract of a Marketing Consultant. Although a magic 'silver bullet' is unlikely, an external consideration of opportunities to develop the business is very welcome.

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 Marketing Officer left for another job - specialist skills lost. The venue was in danger of closing and that likelihood was published in the local press. Local support was swift - but inevitably a one-off. Such a precarious position impacted on programming, especially of live events.

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

WG could facilitate ACW as an 'honest broker' supporting venues to coordinate small-scale activities such as a Comedy Weekend, or a 'Battle of the Bands' weekend either before or after a large-scale event such as the Hay Literature Festival or the Royal Welsh Show. This could better link up with Visit Wales tourist information.

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

If Wyeside Arts Centre is not exist, people in the county town of Llandrindod would have to travel a round trip of 50miles to see a film. The prices are community-friendly for people of a lower socioeconomic status with a family ticket of £20 (two adults, two children) the cheapest for 40miles. Special relaxed performances people with protected characteristics are available every month. Without a continued business, these groups in particular are not able to access the arts.

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

A move to enable Cymraeg surtitles for productions in English, and English surtitles for productions/films in Cymraeg would be very welcome to small venues and encourage Welsh culture more widely in Eastern Mid-Wales
