

# Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025-26

February 2025

## 1. Introduction

**1.** This report sets out the views of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee on the Welsh Government's Draft Budget for 2025-26. Our report is intended to inform the debate on Tuesday 4 February 2025.

**2.** Our scrutiny has been informed by:

- written evidence provided by the Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership ("the Minister"); the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language ("the Cabinet Secretary"), and the First Minister;
- oral evidence sessions with the Cabinet Secretary and the Minister on Thursday 16 January 2025;
- oral and written evidence provided by public sector bodies during general scrutiny in autumn 2024;
- the views of stakeholders in written evidence submitted to the Finance Committee; and
- the views of other stakeholders and members of the public submitted in written evidence to this Committee.

**3.** Our report is structured in accordance with the three ministerial portfolios and how they correspond with our remit:



- Culture, Communications and Sport (Minister);
- Welsh Language (Cabinet Secretary);
- International Relations (First Minister).

**4.** Julie Morgan MS and Jenny Rathbone MS participated in our scrutiny on 16 January 2025 as a substitutes for Lee Waters MS and Mick Antoniw MS.

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## 2. Culture, Communication and Sport

### Overview

**5.** Overall, revenue and capital funding for the Culture, Communication and Sport elements of our remit has increased from £178.4 million in the 2025-26 revised baseline to £203.4 million in the 2025-26 Draft Budget (an increase of 14 per cent in cash terms). The allocated funding comprises:

- **Revenue funding:** £130.1 million This is a 6 per cent increase in cash terms compared with the £123.0 million in the 2025-26 revised baseline. Not accounting for inflation, overall revenue funding has returned to its 2023-24 level (also £130.1 million). Other than the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, revenue funding for arm's-length-bodies supported by this portfolio all remain slightly lower than they were in 2023-24, when non-cash is excluded;
- **Capital funding:** £73.3 million. This is a 32 per cent increase in cash terms compared with the £54.4 million in the 2025-26 revised baseline.

**6.** These allocations cover the following Actions:

- **Culture and the Arts:** including funding for the Arts Council of Wales, Amgueddfa Cymru, the National Library, and support for local culture and sport;
- **Sports and Physical Activity:** including funding for Sport Wales;
- **The Historic Environment:** mostly funded through Cadw (the Welsh Government's heritage division), but also including the National Botanic Garden and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales;
- **Creative Wales:** the Welsh Government's creative industries division.

**7.** Table 1 compares the revenue and capital allocations for these Actions in the 2025-26 Draft Budget with the allocations in the revised 2025-26 baseline.

**Table 1 Summary of allocations for relevant Actions**

Action	Funding type	Revised 2025-26 baseline (£million)	2025-26 Draft Budget (£million)	Increase in cash terms
<b>Culture and the Arts</b>	Revenue	£79.0	£83.6	6%
	Capital	£32.1	£40.2	25%
<b>Sports and Physical Activity</b>	Revenue	£21.8	£22.6	4%
	Capital	£8.0	£9.5	19%
<b>Historic Environment</b>	Revenue	£16.9	£17.4	3%
	Capital	£10.3	£16.6	61%
<b>Creative Wales</b>	Revenue	£5.3	£6.5	23%
	Capital	£5.0	£7.0	40%

### The Welsh Government’s ambitions for the sector

8. In written evidence, the Minister indicated that the revenue uplift across the sector would allow arm’s-length bodies to “manage inflationary cost pressures, make plans for a public sector pay award in 2025-26 and to contribute to the ongoing running costs of Celf”.<sup>1</sup> When asked whether this was realistic, as the revenue uplift only returns the sector to 2023-24 funding levels, the Minister said:

*“I think it’s worth starting the committee in the context of where we are now and where, perhaps, we have been in the past. This is a budget that is a step in the right direction. This is an increase of 3.6 per cent to arm’s-length bodies and is an increase to the budget overall across the arts, culture and sport portfolio. And if we just look at the £5 million in revenue and £18.4 million in capital, our capital expenditure is a real success story there.”<sup>2</sup>*

9. We asked whether the Minister agreed with the Arts Council of Wales that there is “a crisis currently facing the culture sector”.<sup>3</sup> He said:

<sup>1</sup> Welsh Government, [Evidence paper on the 2025-26 Draft Budget for the Senedd Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee](#), 16 January 2025, page 3

<sup>2</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee - 16 January 2025, paragraph 142](#)

<sup>3</sup> [IFRCS35 Arts Council of Wales](#)

*"I wouldn't describe it as a crisis myself. I think, no doubt, in that context that we've all heard already this morning, and had the opportunity to discuss many a time now, the arts have still gone on and delivered, and we have seen that in constituencies right across Wales, Chair. And we have supported the arts through those challenging times as well. So, I wouldn't myself describe it as a crisis. There are challenges, and we will work collaboratively and in partnership with the sector to overcome those challenges, like we have done in previous years."*<sup>4</sup>

**10.** Recent Senedd Research analysis of government spending in Wales and other European nations shows that Wales ranks:

- Third from bottom in terms of recreational and sporting services spending per person, with £59.75 per person compared with the UK's £66.18 per person;
- Second from bottom in terms of cultural services spending per person, with £69.68 per person compared with the UK's £91.12 per person.<sup>5</sup>

**11.** When asked whether the 2025-26 Draft Budget is a turning point in the Welsh Government's overall approach to funding culture and sport, the Minister said:

*"Well, it's a step in the right direction, isn't it, and it's the first step in the right direction. I'm not prepared to sit here today and announce budgets for additional years ahead when we don't know what the settlement will be for the Welsh Government budget overall, but it does provide a sense of where we want to take culture budgets, and the importance we place on the budget of this side of responsibilities of the Welsh Government, for all the things that this committee is aware of, what the portfolio offers, whether that be in health, and all of those other particular things.*

*I can't say today, Chair, that we're going to announce a significant increase again and again. What I would like to say is that this proves that we take the arts and culture sector*

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<sup>4</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee - 16 January 2025, paragraph 182](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, A decade of cuts: Impact of funding reductions for culture and sport](#), January 2025, Figures 1 and 2

*seriously. This is an increase of the budget. It's our first budget since the general election with a partner who's willing to work with the Welsh Government and devolution. I'd like to hope that sets a sense of direction to the industry: 'We take you seriously. We will work with you in the, no doubt, still challenging times'. It does set that sense of direction where we want to take this. Both the First Minister and I are very keen to support the sector where we can, and we have done."*<sup>6</sup>

### **Employer national insurance contributions**

**12.** In December 2024, Amgueddfa Cymru told us that its primary concern regarding the 2025-26 Draft Budget allocations was uncertainty about funding for the additional costs associated with the increases in employer national insurance contributions.<sup>7</sup> Highlighting both the scale of the costs—estimated at £0.5 million in the context of a revenue uplift of £0.9 million—and the short time available to plan, Amgueddfa Cymru representatives explained:

*"That hasn't been specifically addressed so far in the budget announcements, but that doesn't mean that it's off the table. I think what we've been led to believe is that there are further discussions to be had about whether the Welsh Government has the capacity to cover that for us as arm's-length bodies."*<sup>8</sup>

**13.** Similarly, Community Leisure UK wrote to us in December 2024, outlining concerns about the "direct, deep and long-term impact" on the charities and social enterprises comprising its membership:

*"The impact of the increase in national insurance, which comes on top of a range of other financial challenges, will impact on our members' ability to retain their staffing levels and to improve and develop our services to the community, which will in turn ultimately impact on their physical and mental health, wellbeing and economic prospects"*<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 16 January 2025, paragraphs 148 to 149](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 11 December 2024, paragraph 12](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 11 December 2024, paragraph 12](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Letter from Community Leisure UK – 5 December 2024](#)

**14.** When asked about the impact of the increases to employer national insurance contributions on arm's-length bodies and other organisations within the sector, the Minister focused his response on arm's-length bodies and the public sector. He explained that the UK Government had committed to funding the costs for public sector employers in Wales (estimated by the Welsh Government to be £253 million), but that details were not yet available about how much funding the UK Government would provide. He added that the Welsh Government was discussing the matter with arm's-length bodies, and would “look to support them where we can”.<sup>10</sup> He described himself as “not too concerned” that it was unclear whether the definition of ‘public sector’ for the purposes of eligibility for government support would include arm's-length bodies. He said:

*“I’m confident that we’ll have the detail in front of us, and we’ll have that in enough time to have those conversations with colleagues.”<sup>11</sup>*

## Remits and responsibilities

**15.** When asked about whether the 2025-26 Draft Budget allocations would require arm's-length bodies to do more with less in order to fund additional demands, the Minister confirmed that he expected bodies to deliver against their remit letters. He described the Draft Budget as providing:

*“[...] a better picture for them, isn’t it? It’s an increase in their budget, and they have more scope to play with now than perhaps we expected before the general election last year. Arm’s-length bodies will be developing their operational plans for the year—that’ll be the point where we’ll monitor that progress and see what they come up with and how they will achieve that. But I’m not expecting drastic change, Chair.”<sup>12</sup>*

**16.** In particular, we discussed the roles of Cadw and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. The Minister told us his priority

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<sup>10</sup> Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 16 January 2025, paragraphs 169 to 170.

<sup>11</sup> Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 16 January 2025, paragraph 179.

<sup>12</sup> Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 16 January 2025, paragraph 143.

was to find the “most efficient model”, and work was underway to identify potential options.<sup>13</sup>

**17.** We also discussed the financial sustainability of Cadw, including the assumption in the Draft Budget of a 5 per cent increase in commercial income. The Minister's officials explained that Cadw's income streams had increased “significantly” in recent years. Acknowledging changing behaviours in the visitor sector economy and reducing footfalls, they said the uplift in revenue funding would be:

*“[...] targeted at those front-line services and how we can ensure that the offer that we've got to people coming along to visitor centres is as good as we can make it”.*<sup>14</sup>

**18.** Recognising that the level and type of detailed information available about arm's-length bodies such as Amgueddfa Cymru is not routinely available for Cadw, due to its position within government, the Minister indicated he would be willing to provide further information to facilitate scrutiny.<sup>15</sup>

### Capital funding

**19.** In December 2024, Amgueddfa Cymru told us:

*“I would love us to be in the position that Cadw is in, where all of the capital funding comes as part of their annual allocation from the Government. But because we get it either through grant in aid or as projects, that creates two very different scenarios for us. When it's grant in aid, we obviously have an understanding about how it can be spent, there are guidelines, et cetera, and Kate and I are held accountable that it is spent appropriately and on time. But when it's project allocation, then we have to make the case, and that can be a very lengthy process.”*<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 16 January 2025, paragraphs 294 and 296

<sup>14</sup> Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 16 January 2025, paragraphs 302 to 303

<sup>15</sup> Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 16 January 2025, paragraph 306

<sup>16</sup> Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 11 December 2024, paragraph 13



**20.** When asked what consideration he had given to providing all capital funding for organisations such as Amgueddfa Cymru and the National Library through grant-in-aid funding rather than individual business cases, the Minister acknowledged our recent recommendation<sup>17</sup> on this matter. Confirming that he would respond in due course, he said:

*"[...] I am actively considering if we can streamline that process to make it a better process, but I just want to place the caveat on that as well: this is public money, and it needs to be spent in the proper way. But if there are solutions to be found to some of this and we can help manage that process in a better way, then I would never be against that"*<sup>18</sup>

**21.** We discussed with the Minister what scope there was on a whole-government basis to fund significant capital projects within the culture sector should it be required. The Minister emphasised the increased capital allocations in the 2025-26 Draft Budget, which he described as evidence of “the commitment from Government across the piece to address some of these issues, which are of national importance”.<sup>19</sup> The Minister’s official noted the Wales Infrastructure Investment Strategy, through which capital funding can be allocated to projects and departments across the Welsh Government.<sup>20</sup>

## Preventative spending

**22.** The Minister’s written evidence said the Draft Budget reflected his “continuing commitment to protect and prioritise investment that supports preventative measures as far as possible”.<sup>21</sup> In oral evidence, the Minister gave examples of cross-government spending on prevention—including capital investment in sports facilities and funding for programmes such as Healthy Weight, Healthy Wales—and local government spending on local and community facilities and services. He added that:

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<sup>17</sup> Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, [A decade of cuts: Impact of funding reductions for culture and sport](#), January 2025, recommendation 5

<sup>18</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 16 January 2025, paragraphs 246 and 248](#)

<sup>19</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 16 January 2025, paragraph 252](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 16 January 2025, paragraph 256](#)

<sup>21</sup> Welsh Government, [Evidence paper on the 2025-26 Draft Budget for the Senedd Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee](#), 16 January 2025, page 8

*“Where there’s more that we can do and help with in that space, then we should be looking at that. I think I’ve mentioned before the work, in particular, around mental health and the role that sport can play in that—whether that be playing sport or actually just accessing some of the sport, and it’s the same for the arts and culture sector as well. I’m hoping that I will continue to drive that initiative around mental health, in particular.”<sup>22</sup>*

**23.** When pressed on who was responsible for driving the “greater cross-sector prioritisation” referred to in his written evidence as being needed to deliver the preventative health benefits of sport,<sup>23</sup> the Minister said:

*“I think that we’ll all take that view, won’t we? So, the Cabinet will take the view on that, Chair. There are areas where we already do that. Where we can strengthen that and look to do it, we will. The conversations I’m having with the Minister for mental health demonstrate that already.”<sup>24</sup>*

**24.** We asked whether a stronger case needed to be made within government to increase spending on preventative measures, in particular whether consideration could or should be given to including prevention as a category of spend within future budgets. The Minister said that the Welsh Government was already investing in the preventative benefits of art and sports, but that he would consider further the point about presentation in the budget.<sup>25</sup>

## Our view

### The Welsh Government’s ambitions for the sector

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**25.** During our recent inquiry on the impact of funding reductions on culture and sport we spoke to stakeholders across the culture, sport and historic environment sectors. On the basis of their evidence, we concluded that historic

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<sup>22</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 16 January 2025, paragraphs 267 to 269](#)

<sup>23</sup> [Welsh Government, Evidence paper on the 2025-26 Draft Budget for the Senedd Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee](#), 16 January 2025, page 9

<sup>24</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 16 January 2025, paragraph 278](#)

<sup>25</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 16 January 2025, paragraph 288](#)

underfunding of the sector by the Welsh Government, exacerbated by reductions in revenue funding in recent years, meant:

*"The culture and sport sectors are brittle and under-resourced, which has led to insufficient access to culture and sport across the nation, undermining attempts to broaden access by our national bodies. This insufficient access is likely to scar Wales's culture and sport output for years to come, as fewer of tomorrow's artists and sportspeople will have had the start and support they need to succeed. Culture and sport are not luxuries reserved for times of plenty. They are vital threads in the fabric of what makes life worth living. The social infrastructure fostered by culture and sport is as important for a nation as its transport and communication infrastructure, but has been neglected by successive Welsh Governments."*<sup>26</sup>

**26.** We note that the materials accompanying the Draft Budget, caution that:

*"Despite the increases in government spending on public services this year and next, the outlook for public finances beyond looks challenging [...]"*

*The Welsh Government's resource budget in 2025-26 is up 5% in real terms compared to outturn for 2023-24 on a like-for-like basis. Estimates for future years suggest more modest increases."*<sup>27</sup>

**27.** In this context, we acknowledge the Minister's view that the 2025-26 Draft Budget allocations are "a step in the right direction".<sup>28</sup>

**28.** However, taking into account the evidence we have received about the depth and impact of the funding situation, and the sector's own use of terms such as 'crisis', we have significant concerns about whether the Minister fully appreciates the extent of the pressures the sector is facing.

**29.** The Minister shared with us a number of specific examples of Welsh Government funding enabling organisations or venues to stay open or avoid

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<sup>26</sup> Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, [A decade of cuts: Impact of funding reductions for culture and sport](#), January 2025, paragraph 235

<sup>27</sup> Welsh Government, [Wales economic and fiscal report 2024](#), December 2024, page 3

<sup>28</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee - 16 January 2025, paragraph 142](#)

having to reduce their services. We agree that these examples demonstrate the positive impact Welsh Government funding can have when it is available. Unfortunately, funding is not always available, and we heard many more examples throughout our recent inquiry about other organisations and venues that are struggling.

**30.** In our report, we called on the Welsh Government to “increase funding for culture and sport until they are comparable (in terms of spending per head) with those of similar nations”.<sup>29</sup> The revenue allocations in the Draft Budget are an increase on the 2025-26 revised baseline, but, accounting for inflation, remain lower than in 2023-24. Any increase is better than none, but we are not yet assured that the allocations are sufficient to improve the situation materially, especially in the context of inflationary pressures, a potential public sector pay award, and increases in employer national insurance contributions.

**31.** We are disappointed that the Minister was unable to give us any assurance that the 2025-26 allocations represent a turning point in the Welsh Government's approach to funding for the sector. We understand that he is not in a position to anticipate the Welsh Government's Draft Budgets for subsequent years, but we regret that he did not take the opportunity provided by the evidence session to set out his ambitions and aspirations, and explain how he will advocate for the sectors as the Final Budget proposals are developed.

**Recommendation 1.** When responding to recommendation 1 of our January 2025 report ‘A decade of cuts: the impact of funding reductions for culture and sport’, the Welsh Government should confirm whether it shares our ambition for funding for culture and sport to be comparable (in terms of spending per head) with those of similar nations.

### Employer national insurance contributions

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**32.** The changes to employer national insurance contributions could increase costs for organisations across the sector, and we have heard from Community Leisure UK, among others, about the pressures to which this may give rise.<sup>30</sup>

**33.** Arm's-length bodies in the sector face difficulties in planning their activity for the 2025-26 financial year, as it continues to be unclear whether UK or Welsh Government support will be available or whether they will need to meet the

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<sup>29</sup> Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, [A decade of cuts: Impact of funding reductions for culture and sport](#), January 2025, recommendation 1

<sup>30</sup> [Letter from Community Leisure UK](#) – 5 December 2024

additional costs through their revenue allocations. The scale of the issue is significant: for example, the £0.5 million additional employer contribution costs for Amgueddfa Cymru represent more than half of the estimated £0.9 million uplift in revenue allocation.<sup>31</sup> We welcome the Minister's agreement<sup>32</sup> to share further information with us as discussions with the UK Government and arm's-length bodies progress.

**Recommendation 2.** The Welsh Government should:

- Confirm as a matter of urgency the timescales within which arm's-length bodies in the culture, sport and historic environment sector will have clarity about whether they will be eligible for any UK or Welsh Government support to cover increased employer national insurance contributions;
- Write to us within four weeks of the Welsh Government receiving confirmation of the support that will be provided by the UK Government to outline for each of the arm's-length bodies what proportion of the costs associated with the increase will be met by the UK or Welsh Governments, and what proportion will need to be met by each body from its revenue allocation.

## Remits and responsibilities

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**34.** Public money must be used effectively and transparently. However, as we concluded in our recent report on the impact of funding reductions on culture and sport, the Welsh Government's expectations of what arm's-length bodies can realistically achieve must be proportionate to the level of funding. We therefore reiterate recommendation 11 of that report, which called on the Welsh Government to review arm's-length bodies' remit letters to ensure that the requirements are "clear and tangible, and proportionate to the level of funding".<sup>33</sup>

**35.** We note the Minister's letter of 5 December 2024, outlining work to review the relationship between Cadw and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and

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<sup>31</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 11 December 2024, paragraph 12](#)

<sup>32</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 16 January 2025, paragraph 174](#)

<sup>33</sup> Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, [A decade of cuts: Impact of funding reductions for culture and sport](#), January 2025, recommendation 11

Historical Monuments of Wales.<sup>34</sup> We would like to be kept updated on this work as it progresses.

**36.** Our scrutiny is, at times, hindered by a lack of similar levels of detailed information about Cadw's operation, performance and spending as is available in the annual reports of arm's-length bodies such as Amgueddfa Cymru. We welcome the Minister's commitment during the session to provide this information, subject to consideration of the appropriate format.<sup>35</sup>

**Recommendation 3.** The Welsh Government should:

- In its response to our report, provide an update on the review of the relationship between Cadw and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. This should include information about any emerging options, and the timescales within which a final decision and implementation are anticipated;
- Commit to providing us on an annual basis with information about Cadw's operation, performance and spending.

### Capital funding

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**37.** We reiterate recommendation 5 of our recent report, in which we called on the Welsh Government to “empower culture and sport organisations by enabling them to spend additional capital funding provided by the Welsh Government according to their own governance processes, and not requiring undue additional authorisation from the Welsh Government”.<sup>36</sup> We welcome the Minister's indication during the evidence session that he was “actively considering” how the business case system could be improved.<sup>37</sup>

**38.** We also welcome the offer from the Minister's official to provide further details about the potential to access additional capital funding through the Wales Infrastructure Investment Strategy.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> [Letter from the Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership](#) – 5 December 2024

<sup>35</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 16 January 2025, paragraph 306](#)

<sup>36</sup> [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, A decade of cuts: Impact of funding reductions for culture and sport](#), January 2025, recommendation 5

<sup>37</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 16 January 2025, paragraphs 246 and 248](#)

<sup>38</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 16 January 2025, paragraph 256](#)

**Recommendation 4.** The Welsh Government should provide details about the process for accessing capital funding through the Wales Infrastructure Investment Strategy, including how projects are prioritised and what bids have been put forward (or are being prepared) for projects within the culture, sports and historic environment sector.

### Preventative spending

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**39.** The Welsh Government's evidence on the Draft Budget states:

*"Sport can be a very effective preventative health tool, but greater cross-sector prioritisation is needed to create the long-term sustainable shifts in participation."*<sup>39</sup>

**40.** This is the fourth consecutive year in which a broadly similar sentence has been included. We are disappointed that the Minister was unable to assure us either that there is a plan in place for such cross-sector prioritisation, or that steps are being taken to develop such a plan.

**41.** We understand that the Welsh Government's key priority for the Draft Budget is the NHS.<sup>40</sup> However, we note that, in its report on the 2024-25 Draft Budget, the Finance Committee highlighted the "worrying development" of contributors to its work describing:

*"[...] an emerging trend in shifting funding away from prevention in order to fund the Welsh Government's stated aim of protecting frontline services as much as possible".*<sup>41</sup>

**42.** Whilst we understand the pressures on frontline services, the purpose of funding preventative areas such as sport and culture is to reduce those pressures. Waiting to invest in preventative measures until frontline services are sufficiently funded—should it even be possible to reach such a point—means people and communities in Wales are missing out on the potential benefits for population health and wellbeing and the savings that earlier investment in such areas could bring.

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<sup>39</sup> Welsh Government, [Evidence paper on the 2025-26 Draft Budget for the Senedd Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee](#), 16 January 2025, page 9

<sup>40</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee - 16 January 2025, paragraph 163](#)

<sup>41</sup> Finance Committee, [Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024-25](#), February 2024, paragraph 130

**43.** We welcome the Minister's agreement during the evidence session to consider the recommendation made by the Health and Social Care Committee in its report on the 2024-25 Draft Budget<sup>42</sup> (and highlighted in recommendation 2 of our recent report) to:

*"[...] consider introducing, across all its departments, a 'preventative' category of spend in future budgets, moving towards a longer term budgeting view to help build and protect population health".<sup>43</sup>*

**44.** In our view such an approach would help recognise and properly fund culture and sport for the value they have beyond their intrinsic worth, not least as key vehicles for achieving the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

### Other issues

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**45.** During the evidence session we were unable to cover in detail all of the issues arising from the 2025-26 Draft Budget. We would therefore welcome further information from the Minister on the following points:

- a. What funding has been allocated to the publishing sector, and whether the Minister is confident that the allocation will be sufficient to alleviate the pressures on a sector which recently described itself to us as being "at breaking point"?<sup>44</sup>
- b. What funding has been allocated to the National Music Service?
- c. What funding has been allocated to the establishment of a broadcasting and communications advisory body (as announced by the Welsh Government in March 2024<sup>45</sup>), and within what timescales does the Welsh Government anticipate making further announcements about the body and its work?

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<sup>42</sup> Health and Social Care Committee, [Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024-25](#), February 2024, recommendation 19

<sup>43</sup> Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, [A decade of cuts: Impact of funding reductions for culture and sport](#), January 2025, recommendation 2

<sup>44</sup> Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, [A decade of cuts: Impact of funding reductions for culture and sport](#), January 2025, paragraph 140

<sup>45</sup> Welsh Government, [Written statement: update on broadcasting](#), 12 March 2024

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- d. How has the £1.1 million of revenue funding that has been transferred from the Broadcasting and Media BEL to the Creative Wales BEL been allocated?
- e. What revenue and capital funding has been allocated to the National Contemporary Art Gallery in 2025-26, and according to the current plans, what are the ongoing funding requirements of this project, and how will they be met?

**Recommendation 5.** In its response to our report, the Welsh Government should provide written responses to the questions posed in paragraph 45 of this report, covering areas we were unable to explore in detail during the evidence session. This includes matters relating to the publishing sector, the National Music Service, the broadcasting and communications advisory body, the allocation of funding transferred from the Broadcasting and Media BEL to the Creative Wales BEL, and funding for the National Contemporary Art Gallery.

## 3. Welsh Language

### Overview

**46.** The Welsh language is a cross-cutting policy area, with expenditure embedded across ministerial portfolios. This means it is not possible for us to scrutinise every funding allocation aimed at supporting and promoting the Welsh language. We have focused our scrutiny on the Actions in the Draft Budget that are specific to the Welsh language:

- **Welsh Language:** which includes funding for the Welsh language, (including delivery of the Cymraeg 2050 ambitions to increase the use of the Welsh language and establish the correct infrastructure to support its use), and the Welsh Language Commissioner;
- **Cymraeg 2050 (Local Authority Education Grant):** established in 2024-25, the LAEG brings together a number of local authority and education consortia grants;
- **Welsh in Education:** which funds a range of activities relating to planning Welsh-medium and Welsh language education (including Welsh-medium early years provision) mainly through Mudiad Meithrin and funding for the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. It also includes funding for the e-sgol programme and Adnodd (the Welsh Government subsidiary company which oversees the provision of educational resources to support the teaching and learning of Curriculum for Wales).

**47.** The Cabinet Secretary told us that funding for the Welsh language in the 2024-25 financial year (current financial year) had largely been protected from the reductions faced by other policy areas. He said:

*“Now, for the next financial year, the budget will rise, with £4.6 million in additional funding to invest in the area of the Welsh language. So, we can't fill all the gaps; we can't go back to where we were before the current financial year, but we can recover some of the lost ground, for example, in terms of the Welsh Language Commissioner. And we will be in a much*

*better position next year than the one we were facing in the current financial year.”<sup>46</sup>*

**48.** The 2025-26 Draft Budget allocates £57.2 million in targeted Welsh language funding across the specific Actions above. This equates to a £3.6 million increase on the 2024-25 Final Budget (£53.5 million). The Draft Budget does allocate an additional £4.6 million for the Welsh language, but also transfers out £1.1 million to the Teacher Development and Support BEL which sits within the Education MEG.

**49.** The allocation for the Cymraeg 2050 (LAEG) is £8.6 million, a reduction of £1.1 million on the 2024-25 allocation. The Cabinet Secretary's evidence paper explains that the reduction is “an administrative transfer” of funding to the Teacher Development and Support BEL reflecting changes in ministerial portfolios.<sup>47</sup> The paper also notes that the £1.1 million will “still support professional learning for Welsh-medium practitioners and develop the language skills of all practitioners”.

**50.** Around two-thirds of the funding in the Cymraeg (LAEG) BEL, around £5.9 million, is allocated to local authorities to support the delivery of local authority Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (“WESPs”) and the ambitions of the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill<sup>48</sup> (“the Bill”). The remaining £2.2 million in the BEL is understood to be allocated to supporting the development of Welsh language late immersion provision across Wales.

## **Support for the Welsh language beyond the classroom**

**51.** The Cabinet Secretary told us that, whilst the Welsh Government's budget process applies only to a single financial year, he and the First Minister had agreed to commit funding for “the next decade” to deliver on the ambitions and the provisions in the Bill.<sup>49</sup>

**52.** The provisions in the Bill focus primarily on Welsh language education provision in the statutory sector, but also seek to influence individuals' language journeys from early-years through to adult learning and skills development. We asked the Cabinet Secretary about the academic research the Welsh Government has commissioned on the use of the Welsh language outside the school and in the community, and whether there is sufficient resource and/or flexibility in the

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<sup>46</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee - 16 January 2025, paragraph 8](#)

<sup>47</sup> Welsh Government, [Evidence paper on Draft Budget 2025-26 - Welsh Language Budgets](#), 16 January 2025, page 5

<sup>48</sup> [Welsh Language and Education \(Wales\) Bill](#) [accessed 22 January 2025]

<sup>49</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee - 16 January 2025, paragraph 85](#)

budget to respond to any changes in the Welsh Government's priorities that might emerge. The Cabinet Secretary said that, under those circumstances, the Welsh Government would have to divert funding from areas where it had less impact:

*"Well, that is going to be difficult, because there is nothing that we are doing at present that we don't think is important or makes a contribution to everything that we want to do in terms of 2050. So, if new things do emerge from the research, there will be difficult decisions to be made because we don't have much flexibility in the budgets that we have, because we use every penny."<sup>50</sup>*

**53.** We discussed with the Cabinet Secretary the work of the mentrau iaith in finding ways to help young people, in particular, to enjoy using the Welsh language beyond education,<sup>51</sup> and the Urdd's work on promoting Welsh through sport.<sup>52</sup> The Cabinet Secretary's official explained that the mentrau iaith provision varies across local authorities, but often includes school holiday programmes, local festivals to help families engage with Welsh language culture, and Welsh language music playlists to help normalise the language.<sup>53</sup> Responding to a question about the impact of increasing costs on organisations' ability to deliver this type of activity, the Cabinet Secretary acknowledged the financial pressures, but said that his discussions with the mentrau iaith suggested that the increased allocations in the 2025-26 Draft Budget would enable them to expand their activities.<sup>54</sup>

### **Mentrau iaith funding**

**54.** In December 2021, a mentrau iaith representative told us:

*"The core funding of the mentrau hasn't increased at all in the past eight years. We are very successful in bringing alternative*

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<sup>50</sup> Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 16 January 2025, paragraphs 90 and 91

<sup>51</sup> Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 16 January 2025, paragraph 41

<sup>52</sup> Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 16 January 2025, paragraph 45

<sup>53</sup> Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 16 January 2025, paragraphs 49 to 50

<sup>54</sup> Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 16 January 2025, paragraph 53

*sources of funding in, but the more core funding we have then the more we can generate ourselves.”<sup>55</sup>*

**55.** The Cabinet Secretary's evidence paper notes:

*“As a result of the uplift to the Welsh Language budget, we propose that partners receiving grants to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language receive a minimum 5% uplift in 2025-26. In addition, some organisations will receive additional support to help increase their impact on the Cymraeg 2050 objectives. For example, we propose that the minimum grant allocation to the mentrau iaith will increase from £60k to £100k”.*<sup>56</sup>

**56.** The Cabinet Secretary confirmed that the increases proposed in the 2025-26 Draft Budget meant every menter iaith would receive at least £0.1 million of Welsh Government funding, and that the allocations would be baselined for future years.<sup>57</sup> He said that the mentrau iaith receive the majority of their funding from other sources—for example in 2024-25 only around 30 per cent of the funding came from the Welsh Government—but that the availability of Welsh Government funding helps them access alternative funding sources:

*“So, it's always been part of the purpose of the Welsh Government investment in the mentrau iaith that it enables them to secure alternative and other sources of funding, and they've been very successful in doing that.*

*[...] The more money you have, the more able you are to raise money, because you've got the resources available to you to do the work that brings the money in. It's the smaller mentrau iaith that have struggled more to increase the base of their funding and they will get the biggest uplift, the ones with the smallest grant at present, and that will help them to do the work that others have done in raising money elsewhere.”<sup>58</sup>*

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<sup>55</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee - 8 December 2021, paragraph 302](#)

<sup>56</sup> Welsh Government, [Evidence paper on Draft Budget 2025-26 - Welsh Language Budgets](#), 16 January 2025, page 7

<sup>57</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee - 16 January 2025, paragraph 112](#)

<sup>58</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee - 16 January 2025, paragraphs 114 to 115](#)

## Welsh-medium education capital grant

**57.** In 2018, the Welsh-medium education capital grant was established to support local authorities to implement their WESPs and the aims of Cymraeg 2050.<sup>59</sup> This funding is separate to the Sustainable Communities Learning Programme (21st Century Schools and Education Funding Programme) which is a much larger capital budget to improve the quality of schools (both Welsh-medium and English-medium schools).<sup>60</sup>

**58.** The Cabinet Secretary's written evidence confirmed that over £128 million of Welsh-medium education capital grant has been approved to date to "increase Welsh-medium education provision across Wales". It indicated that the next phase of the Sustainable Communities Programme would complement the 10-year WESPs, with future spending from the Welsh-medium capital grant "targeted to fund priority areas such as Additional Learning Needs (ALN), immersion, temporary expansion and adult education".<sup>61</sup>

**59.** The Cabinet Secretary described the Welsh-medium education capital grant as "one of the great success stories of the last five years".<sup>62</sup> Indicating that it was part of the broader rolling twenty-first century schools programme, he said that the grant's flexibility enabled it to be used to "respond to changing patterns of need" including increasing late immersion provision and meeting rising levels of Additional Learning Needs:

*"Most of that is not to do with buildings; most of that is to do with the astonishing commitment and skills of the teachers who manage to make all of that happen and the ethos that they create within those units. But nevertheless, those children and those teachers do need physical premises as well, and because it's an expanding part of what we do, then we've used part of the capital grant to offer help to those local authorities who are maybe only just coming on stream with all of this and just getting the confidence of knowing that, if they make provision, there will be young people who will come forward to use it, and that they will be able to be turned into sufficiently*

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<sup>59</sup> Welsh Government, [Press release: Extra £30 million for Welsh medium education](#), 11 March 2021

<sup>60</sup> Welsh Government, [Sustainable communities for learning programme](#) [accessed 22 January 2025]

<sup>61</sup> Welsh Government, [Evidence paper on Draft Budget 2025-26 - Welsh Language Budgets](#), 16 January 2025, page 20

<sup>62</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee - 16 January 2025, paragraph 29](#)

*confident Welsh speakers to be a part of Welsh-medium education. So, that's why we've put some extra priority on those strands within the programme this year and next year, because there is a growth in demand in those areas."*<sup>63</sup>

## Cylchoedd meithrin

**60.** The allocation for Mudiad Meithrin has remained at £3.0 million for a number of years. The Cabinet Secretary's official told us that the Draft Budget for 2025-26 includes an additional £0.5 million for Mudiad Meithrin. She said that, in addition, around 150 practitioners were being provided through the Cam wrth Gam workforce training programme funded by the Minister for Children and Social Care.<sup>64</sup>

**61.** The Cabinet Secretary confirmed that the Welsh Government was on track to meet its target of establishing 150 cylchoedd meithrin by 2028, and that those that had already been established were increasing their provision in terms of numbers of children and contact hours.<sup>65</sup>

**62.** When asked about reports that some cylchoedd may have closed or be at risk of closure due to financial or staffing pressures, the official said:

*"We are aware that there are some cylchoedd that do not continue for a wide variety of reasons, and we monitor on a termly basis with the organisation to see what's happening on the ground."*<sup>66</sup>

## Our view

### Overview

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**63.** We welcome the increased funding for the Welsh language in the 2025-26 Draft Budget. We agree with the Cabinet Secretary that the increases provide an

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<sup>63</sup> Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee - 16 January 2025, paragraphs 31 to 33

<sup>64</sup> Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee - 16 January 2025, paragraph 19

<sup>65</sup> Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee - 16 January 2025, paragraphs 17 to 18

<sup>66</sup> Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee - 16 January 2025, paragraph 21

opportunity to “recover some of the lost ground” resulting from the flat budget in the 2024-25 financial year.<sup>67</sup>

**64.** We note that the uplift for the Welsh Language Commissioner is consistent with that allocated to the Older People’s Commissioner for Wales and the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales. We welcome the clarification from the Cabinet Secretary that the higher increase for the Children’s Commissioner for Wales relates specifically to one-off costs associated with Module 8 of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry.<sup>68</sup>

**65.** We do have some concerns, however, about the potential impact of the increase in employer national insurance contributions on third sector partners who support and promote the use of the Welsh language, including the mentrau iaith, the Urdd and the National Eisteddfod. It is not clear what proportion of the increased allocations will be required to meet these increased costs, rather than improving or expanding service levels or delivering additional activities.

**Recommendation 6.** The Welsh Government should outline what assessment it has undertaken to understand how the changes to employer national insurance contributions will affect each third sector partner organisation that supports and promotes the Welsh language, and the proportion of the additional allocated funding in the Draft Budget for 2025-26 that will be absorbed by the increase.

### **Support for the Welsh language beyond the classroom**

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**66.** We note the commitment made by the Cabinet Secretary and the First Minister to ensure sufficient funding to implement the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill for the next ten years, should it be passed by the Senedd. However, we are less assured about what this means for activity to encourage the use of the Welsh language beyond the classroom, or the flexibility that will be available in future financial years to fund such work.

**67.** There was also insufficient time during our evidence session to discuss with the Cabinet Secretary the availability and role of capital funding in supporting the Welsh language beyond the classroom, particularly through organisations such as the Urdd.

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<sup>67</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee - 16 January 2025, paragraph 8](#)

<sup>68</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee - 16 January 2025, paragraph 53](#)



**68.** In December 2024, we launched our 'Cymraeg for all?' inquiry to explore the challenges and opportunities associated with increasing the use of the Welsh language, with particular focus on areas of Wales with fewer Welsh speakers.<sup>69</sup> We look forward to discussing these matters further with communities, stakeholders and the Cabinet Secretary as our inquiry progresses.

**Recommendation 7.** The Welsh Government should outline how the capital funding allocations in the 2025-26 Draft Budget will help support the use of the Welsh language beyond the classroom. This should include information about the level of capital funding that is available, how partner organisations can apply for funding, how applications will be assessed and prioritised, and how the impact of any funding provided will be monitored and evaluated against the aims in Cymraeg 2050.

### **Mentrau iaith funding**

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**69.** We welcome the increase in funding for the mentrau iaith, and the confirmation from the Cabinet Secretary that the 2025-26 allocations will be baselined for subsequent financial years. This should assist in leveraging additional funding from alternative sources, as well as directly funding work to deliver against the ambitions and objectives in the Cymraeg 2050 strategy and action plan.

**Recommendation 8.** The Welsh Government should outline how, during the 2025-26 financial year, it will monitor the impact of the increased allocations for the mentrau iaith, and how this aligns with the Cymraeg 2050 strategy and action plan.

### **Welsh-medium education capital grant**

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**70.** We agree with the Cabinet Secretary that appropriate physical premises and facilities are essential to meeting the needs of learners and teachers in Welsh-medium settings, and recognise the role of the Welsh-medium education capital grant in achieving this.

**71.** We note the Cabinet Secretary's priorities for the allocation of funding from the grant, and the explanations he gave during the evidence session for including Additional Learning Needs and immersion as priority areas. It would have been helpful for the rationale underpinning these priorities (and the other priority areas

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<sup>69</sup> Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, [Cymraeg for all?](#) [accessed 22 January 2025]

of temporary expansion and adult education) to have been set out in his evidence paper.

**Recommendation 9.** The Welsh Government should outline how the impact of Welsh-medium education capital grant funding on progress in delivering against the Cabinet Secretary's priority areas of Additional Learning Needs, immersion, temporary expansion and adult education will be monitored, evaluated and reported.

### Cylchoedd meithrin

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**72.** We note the Cabinet Secretary's confidence that the target of establishing 150 cylchoedd meithrin by 2028 will be achieved.<sup>70</sup> We welcome his agreement to share further information with us about how the Welsh Government monitors progress on the establishment of new cylchoedd meithrin and the long-term sustainability of those that have been established.

**Recommendation 10.** The Welsh Government should outline how it monitors the establishment and sustainability of new cylchoedd meithrin. This should include information about how many new cylchoedd meithrin have been opened and how many of those have subsequently closed, and details of how the Welsh Government monitors and assesses whether the funding provided is effective in delivering the desired outcomes, and any patterns or learning that have been identified.

### Other issues

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**73.** During the evidence session we were unable to cover in detail all of the issues arising from the 2025-26 Draft Budget. We would therefore welcome further information from the Cabinet Secretary on the following points:

- a. How will the £3.5 million 'reprioritised' funding from 2024-25, which was originally allocated to the Coleg Cymraeg and National Centre for Learning Welsh, be allocated in 2025-26? What level of funding will be allocated to each partner organisation?
- b. What assessment has been undertaken to measure the use made and impact of additional funding for the National Eisteddfod and the Urdd in 2024-25 to widen access to new audiences to the Welsh language,

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<sup>70</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee - 16 January 2025, paragraphs 17 to 19](#)

including low-income families? How has any learning been taken into account when determining the allocations in the 2025-26 Draft Budget?

- c. Within what timescales does the Cabinet Secretary anticipate reaching agreement with the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning on the way forward for funding and delivery of Arfor 2?

**Recommendation 11.** In its response to our report, the Welsh Government should provide written responses to the questions posed in paragraph 73 of this report, covering areas we were unable to explore in detail during the evidence session. This includes matters relating to the allocation of reprioritised funding from the 2024-25 financial year, assessment of the use and impact of additional funding for the National Eisteddfod and the Urdd to widen access to new audiences, and the timescales within which decisions will be taken on the way forward and delivery of Arfor 2.

## 4. International Relations

### Evidence gathering

**74.** We received a written evidence submission from the First Minister on the Welsh Government's Draft Budget for International Relations. As with previous years, the First Minister was invited to give oral evidence but declined. This continued the approach of both her predecessors to international relations budget scrutiny in the Sixth Senedd.

**75.** In a letter dated 20 December 2024, while the Senedd was in recess, the First Minister said:

*"I am very happy to continue answering any questions by correspondence, and will welcome a conversation next year at the annual scrutiny session [in June 2025]".<sup>71</sup>*

**76.** Senedd committees are required to report on their scrutiny of the 2025-26 Draft Budget by 3 February 2025. This is in line with the timetable set by the Business Committee following notification by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language of the dates on which the Welsh Government intended to lay its outline and final budget proposals.

**77.** This leaves insufficient time for exchanges of correspondence, or to wait until the First Minister's agreed appearance before us in June 2025. Our scrutiny is therefore primarily informed by the First Minister's letter dated 20 December 2024.<sup>72</sup> We have also taken account of a letter from the First Minister we received on 28 January 2025.<sup>73</sup>

### Overview of allocations

**78.** The Welsh Government's 2025-26 Draft Budget allocates £9.2 million for International Relations across two main Budget Expenditure Lines (BELs):

- **International Relations BEL:** this supports the delivery of the International Strategy, activities and support for overseas offices (including their running costs), and the delivery of Programme for Government commitments to retain an office in Brussels and establish

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<sup>71</sup> [Letter from the First Minister](#) - 20 December 2024

<sup>72</sup> [Letter from the First Minister](#) - 20 December 2024

<sup>73</sup> [Letter from the First Minister](#) - 28 January 2025

Academi Heddwch. It also supports the Welsh Government’s priority relationships, strategic partnerships and promotional ‘Wales in’ years;

- **International Sustainable Development BEL:** previously named the International Development BEL, the focus of this BEL is not clearly identified in the First Minister’s evidence, although we understand it will include delivery of the Wales and Africa action plan and other international development spend, such as donations of humanitarian aid.

## The International Relations BEL

**79.** The 2025-26 Draft Budget allocation for the International Relations BEL is £8.143 million including a revised baseline adjustment of £50,000 (0.6 per cent) to account for increased pay and pension contribution costs.<sup>74</sup> A high-level breakdown of the BEL is provided in Table 2.

**Table 2 Summary of allocations for the International Relations BEL**

<b>IR BEL 2025-26</b>	<b>Allocation</b>	<b>IR BEL 2024-25</b>	<b>Allocation</b>
<b>International Engagement (including international short-term attachments)</b>	£2,708,600	<b>International Engagement</b>	£2,658,600
<b>Overseas Operations</b>	£4,684,400	<b>Overseas offices - running costs</b>	£4,684,400
<b>Overseas Offices Activity</b>	£750,000	<b>Overseas offices - combined activity budget</b>	£750,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£8,143,000</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>£8,093,000</b>

**80.** In her evidence, the First Minister confirmed that additional breakdowns and allocations were not yet finalised for the following:

- International engagement;
- Four International Strategy action plans;
- Overseas offices;

<sup>74</sup> [Letter from the First Minister](#) - 20 December 2024

- Priority relationships;
- Memorandums of understanding;
- Promotional years, including Wales in Japan 2025.<sup>75</sup>

**81.** The First Minister also indicated that funding for the Welsh Government’s delivery partners was not confirmed, with discussions “still ongoing” regarding Academi Heddwch and “options being considered” for the Size of Wales Mbale Tree Programme.<sup>76</sup>

**82.** The evidence provides no indication of when the First Minister anticipates confirming the additional breakdowns, allocations or funding.

### The International Sustainable Development BEL

**83.** The 2025-26 Draft Budget allocation for the International Sustainable Development BEL is £1.050 million. This allocation supports delivery of the Wales and Africa action plan. It has not been subject to baseline adjustments in line with the International Relations BEL as there are no associated staffing costs. This allocation is unchanged from the 2024-25 Draft and Final Budgets. A high-level breakdown is provided in Table 3.

**Table 3 Summary of allocations for the International Sustainable Development BEL**

<b>Wales and Africa 2025-26</b>	<b>Allocation</b>	<b>Wales and Africa 2024-25</b>	<b>Allocation</b>
<b>Hub Cymru Africa</b>	£349,000 (part of a 3-year grant award agreed in April 2024)	<b>Hub Cymru Africa</b>	£349,000
<b>Small grants scheme</b>	Up to £210,000	<b>Small grants scheme</b>	£210,000
<b>Pan-African Tree Planting projects, including the Size of Wales Mbale Tree Programme</b>	“Options are being considered” but no decision has been made	<b>Size of Wales/Mbale Tree Planting</b>	£450,000 (this formed part of a £550,000 grant to Size of Wales, primarily to deliver the Mbale Tree Planting Programme, with some funding

<sup>75</sup> Letter from the First Minister – 20 December 2024

<sup>76</sup> Letter from the First Minister – 20 December 2024

Wales and Africa 2025-26	Allocation	Wales and Africa 2024-25	Allocation
			allocated to the Bore Community Forest project in Kenya)
<b>Safeguarding project support</b>	Not yet allocated	<b>Safeguarding contract</b>	£6,500
<b>Other projects</b>	Not yet allocated	<b>DEC</b>	£22,000
		<b>Mbale Coalition Against Poverty (CAP)</b>	£12,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,050,000</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,050,000</b>

**84.** Previously, this BEL comprised £700,000 from the Social Justice Main Expenditure Group (“MEG”) under the responsibility of the Minister for Social Justice, and a transfer from the International Relations MEG of £350,000 to deliver the Wales and Africa aspects of the International Strategy. Both BELs are now located within the same MEG, with no intra-MEG transfer showing.

**85.** This BEL was subject to a 23.6 per cent reduction between the 2023-24 Final Budget and the 2024-25 Draft Budget. The former First Minister, Vaughan Gething MS, told us this would affect the Welsh Government’s ability to donate to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza<sup>77</sup>, and had led to the cessation/pause of some Wales and Africa activity.<sup>78</sup>

## International Strategy Delivery Plan

**86.** On 13 December 2024, in oral evidence to the Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister, the First Minister and her officials confirmed that the Welsh Government’s intention was to publish an International Strategy Delivery Plan (“ISDP”). The First Minister explained that the ISDP will:

- replace plans for the anticipated refresh of the International Strategy; and

<sup>77</sup> Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee – 19 June 2024, paragraph 78.

<sup>78</sup> Letter from the First Minister – 20 December 2024

- set out the International Strategy's remaining activities for delivery in the rest of the Sixth Senedd.<sup>79</sup>

**87.** The First Minister's written evidence provides information on planned spend against the International Strategy and existing action plans. However, it states:

*"We will prioritise spend and activities based on what will be set out to achieve within the International Strategy Delivery Plan being drawn up by officials. This will set out my delivery priorities for the remainder of the Strategy's extended lifetime. We prioritise our work to ensure we continue to deliver internationally with those countries and regions where the best outcomes for Wales can be achieved."*<sup>80</sup>

**88.** We note the First Minister's indication in a letter dated 28 January 2025 that she would share the delivery plan with us "in the coming weeks".<sup>81</sup>

### Level of detail

**89.** The First Minister's evidence<sup>82</sup> provides limited detail in terms of finalised breakdowns or allocations, or on outcomes, impact and value for money relating to spend in previous years. For example:

- It shows that outturn for the International Relations BEL for 2023-24 was £563,257 (6.8 per cent) lower than budgeted, but provides no explanation of whether this arose from savings, underspends or a combination of both, whether any planned activity was not delivered, or whether this affected the achievement of the Welsh Government's objectives.
- It provides no evidence of outputs against individual action plans in the current financial year.
- There is limited information regarding planned spending on priority relationships, and some of the information that has been provided relates to countries or regions that are not identified as priority relationships in the International Strategy.

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<sup>79</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister - 13 December 2024, paragraph 15](#)

<sup>80</sup> [Letter from the First Minister](#) - 20 December 2024

<sup>81</sup> [Letter from the First Minister](#) - 28 January 2025

<sup>82</sup> [Letter from the First Minister](#) - 20 December 2024



- It makes no reference to the £6.501 million allocation for 2025-26 in the International Learning Exchange BEL to support delivery of the Welsh Government's five-year Taith programme (2022-26).
- In response to our request for commentary on how the financial implications of EU exit has shaped the Welsh Government's Draft Budget, and on planned spend under her responsibility for Wales and Europe, the evidence states only that:

*"The EU transition BEL has been closed down and the budget previously associated with this BEL baselined into Welsh Government DRC/Staff Costs BEL in 2024-25. The work continues through the International Relations, Overseas Network and Trade Policy teams using existing resources."<sup>83</sup>*

## Transparency

**90.** In written evidence, the First Minister made several statements for which no supporting evidence is provided to demonstrate that internal planning and outcomes align with the International Strategy. For example:

*"All plans will align with the International Strategy and support the delivery of the objectives and action plans."*

*"Value for money is considered for all activities undertaken and the appropriate policies followed when procuring services."*

*"The success of these initiatives [of overseas offices] will be measured through a range of indicators, including economic impact assessments, trade volume increases, and cultural exchange metrics."*

*"The Welsh Government evaluates engagement with major international events by conducting thorough cost-benefit analyses. These assessments consider factors such as the potential for economic growth, opportunities for cultural exchange, and the enhancement of Wales' global standing. By strategically selecting events that align with our objectives, we*

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<sup>83</sup> [Letter from the First Minister](#) – 20 December 2024

*ensure that our participation yields maximum benefits and delivers measurable outcomes.”<sup>84</sup>*

**91.** During the Sixth Senedd, each subsequent First Minister has signposted us to the Welsh Government's overseas network reports to measure output. We note however, that these reports do not link to the International Strategy's actions. In written evidence, the First Minister said that:

*“Due to the nature of international relations, outputs and outcomes can be difficult to quantify and measure. The annual overseas network report is just one of the methods that we have used to report on our outcomes.”<sup>85</sup>*

**92.** In oral evidence to the Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister, the First Minister committed to making key information available in the ISDP about progress made on delivering the International Strategy:

*“There are areas within the strategy that are green, which have been done, they've been delivered. There are bits where it may be red and will continue to be red, and then we need to give you an explanation for why it is red. But there are lots of amber bits in there that we need to say, 'Right, come on, we've got 18 months left; let's get cracking, let's make sure we deliver on what we said we were going to do. So, that is very much the formula that I'm very keen to make sure that you have sight of, where it is we're delivering, and also where you need to hold us to account because we're not.”<sup>86</sup>*

**93.** We note that in a letter dated 28 January 2025 the First Minister said:

*“[...] my priority is for officials to focus on delivering tangible outcomes rather than reviewing or rewriting existing strategies. Instead, we will provide a comprehensive overview that clearly demonstrates progress against the international strategy's three core objectives.”<sup>87</sup>*

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<sup>84</sup> [Letter from the First Minister](#) – 20 December 2024

<sup>85</sup> [Letter from the First Minister](#) – 20 December 2024

<sup>86</sup> [Record of Proceedings: Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister – 13 December 2024, paragraph 196](#)

<sup>87</sup> [Letter from the First Minister](#) – 28 January 2025

## Our view

### Overview

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**94.** We regret that the First Minister declined our invitation to give oral evidence. The First Minister has followed the approach taken by her predecessors not to appear in person despite our repeated concerns with this approach set out in our 2024-25 Draft Budget report.

**95.** The First Minister is accountable to the Senedd for the international relations policy area. The Senedd has given our Committee responsibility for scrutinising the Welsh Government's actions in this area.

**96.** We note that where other First Ministers have chosen to take on policy responsibilities in addition to their responsibilities as First Minister they have also declined such invitations. Our position remains that it is a matter for the Senedd, not the Welsh Government, to determine what constitutes appropriate and effective scrutiny, and how such scrutiny should be conducted.

**97.** While some matters may be addressed through written evidence or correspondence, consideration of other matters is more efficient and more effective through discussion at an oral evidence session.

**98.** As a matter of principle, if a First Minister chooses to take on policy responsibilities, they should make themselves available to be held to account for those responsibilities. If a First Minister is unable to do so, they should consider delegating those responsibilities to another Minister.

**Recommendation 12.** In line with our previous recommendations on this point and the principle of Welsh Government accountability to the Senedd, the Welsh Government must ensure that, where requested by the relevant committee, the Minister with responsibility for International Relations appears in person for oral evidence sessions on future Draft Budgets.

**99.** In the absence of oral evidence, it is vital that the written evidence that is provided is clear, detailed, and high quality. It must provide sufficient information and evidence about intended outputs, outcomes, impact, and value for money.

**100.** The number of points on which we have requested clarification or further information below demonstrates that has not been the case. We regret that, once

more, the information contained in the First Minister's evidence falls below the standard we expect, and that we called for in last year's report.<sup>88</sup>

**101.** This is a serious point; the absence of necessary information, combined with the absence of an opportunity in oral evidence to explore and clarify matters, means that, once more, we are not in a position to scrutinise planned spend on international activity with confidence.

**102.** We note that one final opportunity remains in this Senedd for the Welsh Government to engage effectively in our scrutiny of the Draft Budget proposals for International Relations and ensure parity with other Ministerial portfolios. We expect a significant improvement next year and emphasise that this situation cannot persist into the Seventh Senedd.

**Recommendation 13.** We reiterate our previous recommendations on this matter, that the Welsh Government must ensure that written evidence provided to inform our budget scrutiny includes:

- Comprehensive breakdowns of planned spending within the BEL including International Engagement and International Offices;
- Information relating to outputs, outcomes, impacts and value for money for each area of expenditure within the International Relations BEL;
- Allocations and comparisons with planned spend for forthcoming year against the previous year; and
- An outline of further potential challenges and prioritisations the Welsh Government may need to take in future years.

### Level of detail

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**103.** The international relations budget remains relatively small compared to the level of ambition set out in the Welsh Government's International Strategy and its accompanying action plans. We need assurance that the planned spend is allocated in areas that will deliver the intended outcomes. We can only do this if sufficient detail is provided.

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<sup>88</sup> Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, [Scrutiny of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget for 2024-25](#), February 2024, recommendation 2

**104.** In our 2024-25 Draft Budget and International Relations annual reports, we emphasised the need for more detailed information to aid effective scrutiny and called for a comprehensive breakdown of planned spending.

**105.** We are disappointed that the evidence provided by the First Minister did not provide us with sufficient detail to inform effective scrutiny.

**Recommendation 14.** The Welsh Government should confirm:

- When detailed budget allocations will be available for the International Relations BEL and the International Sustainable Development BEL;
- How the final allocations will affect delivery of the Welsh Government's objectives.

### **Impact on strategic partners**

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**106.** In our 2024-25 Draft Budget report, we expressed concerns about strategic partners being consulted at a late stage in the budget setting process, placing them under undue pressure. For example, we noted that delivery partners had been asked to submit engagement and delivery plans in the first quarter of 2024, after both the publication of the Draft Budget and the completion of the Senedd's scrutiny.<sup>89</sup>

**107.** The First Minister's indication that discussions are still ongoing with partners such as Academi Heddwch and the Size of Wales does not give us confidence that these issues have been resolved. Rather, we remain concerned that discussions with strategic delivery partners are still occurring so late in the budget planning cycle, and about the uncertainty and pressure that results.

**Recommendation 15.** The Welsh Government should:

- Clarify when the final allocations of breakdowns for delivery partners will be available;
- Outline who the Welsh Government's delivery partners are for 2025-26, and which partners have submitted their engagement and delivery plans;

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<sup>89</sup> Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee, [Scrutiny of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget for 2024-25](#), February 2024, paragraph 36

- Outline which delivery partners have received confirmation of their funding, and by when all delivery partners will have received confirmation;
- Set out what steps were taken to obtain key financial information from partners during the development of the Draft Budget for 2025-26, including which steps were taken before and after the publication of the Draft Budget on 20 December 2024;
- Provide details of what contingency plans are in place if delivery partners report in Q1 of 2025 that any reductions in allocations result in insufficient funding to deliver their responsibilities under the International Strategy.

**Recommendation 16.** The Welsh Government should consider what steps can be taken for future budget cycles to engage strategic delivery partners in sufficient time to enable details of proposed allocations to be scrutinised as part of the Draft Budget process.

### International Strategy Delivery Plan

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**108.** The First Minister's written evidence provided partial information on planned spending against the International Strategy and existing action plans. However, it also indicated that funding and activity would be prioritised on the basis of the anticipated ISDP.

**109.** We welcome the indication provided to the Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister in December 2024 that the ISDP will, when published, clearly indicate her priorities for delivery. We also welcome the First Minister's indication that she expects the Senedd to hold her to account for delivery of the ISDP, and her commitment to provide a full update on what has been delivered and what remains to be delivered.<sup>90</sup>

**110.** However, without clarity about the priorities that will be identified in the ISDP, or how funding will be allocated to those priorities, we cannot assess the appropriateness of the Draft Budget allocations for 2025-26 to support either delivery of the Welsh Government's International Strategy or the ISDP.

**111.** We note the First Minister's indication in a letter to us dated 28 January 2025 that she intended to share the ISDP in "the coming weeks", and her offer for

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<sup>90</sup> Record of Proceedings, [Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister - 13 December 2024](#), paragraph 196

Welsh Government officials to provide us with a technical briefing.<sup>91</sup> It remains unclear whether the ISDP will be published in advance of the Final Budget.

**Recommendation 17.** The Welsh Government should, in its response to our report, out a timetable for the publication of the International Strategy Delivery Plan ("ISDP").

**Recommendation 18.** On publication of the ISDP, the Welsh Government must provide to us:

- Updated breakdowns of planned spend within the International Relations BEL, International Sustainable Development BEL and any other relevant BEL. This should be accompanied by clear explanations of how each allocation relates to priorities set out in the ISDP;
- Clarification of whether the ISDP allocations will affect planned spending elsewhere in the International Relations BEL, and if so how; and
- Information about how funding will be allocated between the International Strategy's action plans and the ISDP.

## Transparency

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**112.** In our 2024-25 International Relations annual report we highlighted the need for greater transparency in the design and achievement of international relations objectives, including calling for more information on the outcomes and outputs expected from draft budget allocations to be made readily available.

**113.** The First Minister's written evidence does not include any information on outcomes from the Welsh Government's current financial year or expected outputs. Without this information, we have not been able to assess outcomes, deliverables and value for money in relation to spend.

**114.** The issues identified in this report echo our longstanding concerns about the lack of clarity in previous Draft Budgets.

**Recommendation 19.** The Welsh Government should provide us with the information regarding progress made on delivering the International Strategy the

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<sup>91</sup> [Letter from the First Minister](#) - 28 January 2025

First Minister referred to on 13 December 2024 at a meeting of the Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister.

### Other issues

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**115.** In addition to the matters raised above, we have also identified the following issues on which further clarification or information is required:

- a. Whether responsibility for International Sustainable Development, which was previously in the Social Justice portfolio, now resides with the First Minister?
- b. Whether the £563,257 difference between the International Relations BEL budget and outturn in 2023-24 resulted from savings, underspend or a combination of both, and how this was reallocated? Whether any international relations activity was not delivered as a result, and did this have any implications for achieving the Welsh Government's objectives?
- c. Whether the International Sustainable Development BEL still comprises a £350,000 transfer from the International Relations BEL (not shown on the Draft Budget), or whether the transfer is no longer required (with the result that both BELs have increased by £350,000)?
- d. Whether the activity funded through the International Sustainable Development BEL that was paused/ceased as a result of budget cuts in the 2024-25 financial year can now resume or whether the allocations described by the First Minister in her written evidence will contribute to existing activity only?
- e. Whether allocations are being considered towards responding to global conflict and international emergency appeals, and if so, when will further information be available?
- f. Further information about planned spend in relation to the First Minister's responsibilities for Wales and Europe, the financial implications of EU exit on Wales, how EU exit has shaped the Welsh Government's Draft Budget in respect of International Relations.
- g. When final allocations of breakdowns for the International Learning Exchange BEL will be available, and what consideration is being given to the future funding of Taith beyond 2026?



**Recommendation 20.** In its response to our report, the Welsh Government should provide written responses to the questions posed in paragraph 115 of this report, covering areas on which we require further clarification or information. This includes matters relating to responsibility for International Sustainable Development; the difference between the International Relations BEL budget and outturn in 2023-24; whether the International Sustainable Development BEL still comprises a £350,000 transfer from the International Relations BEL; whether activity funded through the International Sustainable Development BEL that was paused/ceased as a result of budget cuts can now resume; responding to global conflict and international emergency appeals; planned spend in relation to the First Minister's responsibilities for Wales and Europe; and the International Learning Exchange BEL and funding for Taith.

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1.** When responding to recommendation 1 of our January 2025 report 'A decade of cuts: the impact of funding reductions for culture and sport', the Welsh Government should confirm whether it shares our ambition for funding for culture and sport to be comparable (in terms of spending per head) with those of similar nations.....Page 12

**Recommendation 2.** The Welsh Government should:

- Confirm as a matter of urgency the timescales within which arm's-length bodies in the culture, sport and historic environment sector will have clarity about whether they will be eligible for any UK or Welsh Government support to cover increased employer national insurance contributions;
- Write to us within four weeks of the Welsh Government receiving confirmation of the support that will be provided by the UK Government to outline for each of the arm's-length bodies what proportion of the costs associated with the increase will be met by the UK or Welsh Governments, and what proportion will need to be met by each body from its revenue allocation. ....Page 13

**Recommendation 3.** The Welsh Government should:

- In its response to our report, provide an update on the review of the relationship between Cadw and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. This should include information about any emerging options, and the timescales within which a final decision and implementation are anticipated;
- Commit to providing us on an annual basis with information about Cadw's operation, performance and spending. ....Page 14

**Recommendation 4.** The Welsh Government should provide details about the process for accessing capital funding through the Wales Infrastructure Investment Strategy, including how projects are prioritised and what bids have been put forward (or are being prepared) for projects within the culture, sports and historic environment sector. ....Page 15

**Recommendation 5.** In its response to our report, the Welsh Government should provide written responses to the questions posed in paragraph 45 of this report, covering areas we were unable to explore in detail during the evidence session. This includes matters relating to the publishing sector, the National Music Service, the broadcasting and communications advisory body, the allocation of funding transferred from the Broadcasting and Media BEL to the Creative Wales BEL, and funding for the National Contemporary Art Gallery.....Page 17

**Recommendation 6.** The Welsh Government should outline what assessment it has undertaken to understand how the changes to employer national insurance contributions will affect each third sector partner organisation that supports and promotes the Welsh language, and the proportion of the additional allocated funding in the Draft Budget for 2025-26 that will be absorbed by the increase. ....Page 24

**Recommendation 7.** The Welsh Government should outline how the capital funding allocations in the 2025-26 Draft Budget will help support the use of the Welsh language beyond the classroom. This should include information about the level of capital funding that is available, how partner organisations can apply for funding, how applications will be assessed and prioritised, and how the impact of any funding provided will be monitored and evaluated against the aims in Cymraeg 2050.....Page 25

**Recommendation 8.** The Welsh Government should outline how, during the 2025-26 financial year, it will monitor the impact of the increased allocations for the mentrau iaith, and how this aligns with the Cymraeg 2050 strategy and action plan.....Page 25

**Recommendation 9.** The Welsh Government should outline how the impact of Welsh-medium education capital grant funding on progress in delivering against the Cabinet Secretary's priority areas of Additional Learning Needs, immersion, temporary expansion and adult education will be monitored, evaluated and reported..... Page 26

**Recommendation 10.** The Welsh Government should outline how it monitors the establishment and sustainability of new cylchoedd meithrin. This should include information about how many new cylchoedd meithrin have been opened and how many of those have subsequently closed, and details of how the Welsh Government monitors and assesses whether the funding provided is effective in delivering the desired outcomes, and any patterns or learning that have been identified..... Page 26

**Recommendation 11.** In its response to our report, the Welsh Government should provide written responses to the questions posed in paragraph 73 of this report, covering areas we were unable to explore in detail during the evidence session. This includes matters relating to the allocation of reprioritised funding from the 2024-25 financial year, assessment of the use and impact of additional funding for the National Eisteddfod and the Urdd to widen access to new audiences, and the timescales within which decisions will be taken on the way forward and delivery of Arfor 2. ....Page 27

**Recommendation 12.** In line with our previous recommendations on this point and the principle of Welsh Government accountability to the Senedd, the Welsh Government must ensure that, where requested by the relevant committee, the Minister with responsibility for International Relations appears in person for oral evidence sessions on future Draft Budgets..... Page 35

**Recommendation 13.** We reiterate our previous recommendations on this matter, that the Welsh Government must ensure that written evidence provided to inform our budget scrutiny includes:

- Comprehensive breakdowns of planned spending within the BEL including International Engagement and International Offices;
- Information relating to outputs, outcomes, impacts and value for money for each area of expenditure within the International Relations BEL;
- Allocations and comparisons with planned spend for forthcoming year against the previous year; and
- An outline of further potential challenges and prioritisations the Welsh Government may need to take in future years. .... Page 36

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- Outline who the Welsh Government's delivery partners are for 2025-26, and which partners have submitted their engagement and delivery plans;
- Outline which delivery partners have received confirmation of their funding, and by when all delivery partners will have received confirmation;
- Set out what steps were taken to obtain key financial information from partners during the development of the Draft Budget for 2025-26, including which steps were taken before and after the publication of the Draft Budget on 20 December 2024;
- Provide details of what contingency plans are in place if delivery partners report in Q1 of 2025 that any reductions in allocations result in insufficient funding to deliver their responsibilities under the International Strategy. .... Page 38

**Recommendation 16.** The Welsh Government should consider what steps can be taken for future budget cycles to engage strategic delivery partners in sufficient time to enable details of proposed allocations to be scrutinised as part of the Draft Budget process. .... Page 38

**Recommendation 17.** The Welsh Government should, in its response to our report, out a timetable for the publication of the International Strategy Delivery Plan ("ISDP")..... Page 39

**Recommendation 18.** On publication of the ISDP, the Welsh Government must provide to us:

- Updated breakdowns of planned spend within the International Relations BEL, International Sustainable Development BEL and any other relevant BEL. This should be accompanied by clear explanations of how each allocation relates to priorities set out in the ISDP;
- Clarification of whether the ISDP allocations will affect planned spending elsewhere in the International Relations BEL, and if so how; and

- Information about how funding will be allocated between the International Strategy's action plans and the ISDP. .... Page 39

**Recommendation 19.** The Welsh Government should provide us with the information regarding progress made on delivering the International Strategy the First Minister referred to on 13 December 2024 at a meeting of the Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister. .... Page 39

**Recommendation 20.** In its response to our report, the Welsh Government should provide written responses to the questions posed in paragraph 115 of this report, covering areas on which we require further clarification or information. This includes matters relating to responsibility for International Sustainable Development; the difference between the International Relations BEL budget and outturn in 2023-24; whether the International Sustainable Development BEL still comprises a £350,000 transfer from the International Relations BEL; whether activity funded through the International Sustainable Development BEL that was paused/ceased as a result of budget cuts can now resume; responding to global conflict and international emergency appeals; planned spend in relation to the First Minister's responsibilities for Wales and Europe; and the International Learning Exchange BEL and funding for Taith.....Page 41

## Annex 1: List of oral evidence sessions.

The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the committee 16 January 2025. Transcripts of all oral evidence sessions can be viewed on the Committee's website.

Date	Name and Organisation
16 January 2025	<b>Mark Drakeford MS, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language</b> Welsh Government
	<b>Bethan Webb, Deputy Director Cymraeg 2050</b> Welsh Government
	<b>Jeremy Evas, Head of Project 2050</b> Welsh Government
	<b>Jack Sargeant MS, Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership</b> Welsh Government
	<b>Jason Thomas - Director Tourism, Marketing, Events and Creative Wales</b> Welsh Government
	<b>Ruth Meadows - Director Tertiary Education</b> Welsh Government
	<b>Nicky Guy - Deputy Director Culture</b> Welsh Government
	<b>Steffan Roberts - Deputy Director Arts and Sport</b> Welsh Government