

Welsh Parliament

**Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport,
and International Relations Committee**

Annual Report 2021-22

July 2022



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**Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport,
and International Relations Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN**

Tel: **0300 200 6565**

Email: **SeneddCulture@senedd.wales**

Twitter: **[@SeneddCultureIR](https://twitter.com/SeneddCultureIR)**

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About the Committee

The Committee was established on 23 June 2021. Its remit can be found at:
www.senedd.wales/SeneddCulture

Current Committee membership:



**Committee Chair:
Delyth Jewell MS**
Plaid Cymru



Hefin David MS
Welsh Labour



Alun Davies MS
Welsh Labour



Heledd Fychan MS
Plaid Cymru



Tom Giffard MS
Welsh Conservatives



Carolyn Thomas MS
Welsh Labour

The following Member attended as a substitute during this inquiry.



Sam Kurtz MS
Welsh Conservatives

Chair's foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce a summary of activity during the first year of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the associated restrictions have had a tremendous impact on all areas of our work, and that of organisations and individuals that fall within our remit. We have seen visitor numbers to indoor venues such as theatres and live music gigs plummet. There has been a marked shift towards digital engagement with museums and archives. School closures have had an impact on children's Welsh language development, particularly for those who do not speak Welsh in the home. Participation in sporting activity dropped across all ages, but it decreased further in households in deprived areas.

The return to in-person participation in cultural events such as the Eisteddfodau, festivals, sports and school trips is to be welcomed. It is, however, clear that some of the structural changes we saw during the pandemic will continue: for example, this may result in our national collections being accessed digitally, rather than in person, more often. As a Committee we will be exploring what impact these changes will have on different user groups when we will look at this in the future.

During our scrutiny of public service broadcasting, we heard about the considerable challenges broadcasters in Wales are facing, such as proposed changes to licence fee arrangements and the popularity of international streaming services. The UK Government has proposed changes to regulations in their White Paper on broadcasting reforms, so this is an area the Committee will be interested in during the Sixth Senedd.

Unlike the Fifth Senedd, during this Senedd there is no dedicated Minister with specific responsibility for international relations in the Welsh Government. In order to ensure that the scrutiny and profile of this topic does not suffer as a result, we have agreed that the First Minister, who has assumed responsibility for the remit, will attend an annual scrutiny session with the Committee. We are particularly keen to ensure that the global profile of Wales does not diminish due to our changing relationship with the EU and as a result of the wider effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to keep abreast of how the Welsh Government's international work intersects with the other areas of our committee's remit.

The Committee's inquiry into participation in sport and physical activity in disadvantaged areas showed the challenges facing those who cannot easily access facilities and coaching. The obvious health and social benefits of engaging in sporting activity are, too often, limited to

those with the time and money to travel to sports fields or pay for sports facilities. The report of the inquiry made recommendations on how best to level the playing field to ensure access for all.

The Welsh Government has set itself ambitious targets for increasing the number of Welsh speakers to one million by 2050. There are many challenges associated with achieving this target. Those who spoke to the Committee highlighted the lack of opportunities to speak Welsh in schools and through community groups during the lockdown, and the urgent need to increase the Welsh speaking education workforce. The Committee began an inquiry into Welsh in Education Strategic Plans in July 2022 to investigate the challenges associated with developing Welsh medium education provision.

During the course of our first year the increased cost of living has had an impact on all areas of our remit. We will be examining the effect of this increased financial pressure on all the areas of our remit.



Delyth Jewell MS

Chair of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

1. Introduction

- 1.** The Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee of the Sixth Senedd was established on 14 July 2021. The purpose of the Committee is to scrutinise policy and legislation, and to hold the Welsh Government to account in specific areas. These areas include the Welsh Language, culture; the arts; creative industries; historic environment; communications, broadcasting; the media, sport, and international relations.
- 2.** The remit of this Committee was decided at the start of the Sixth Senedd. It is largely the same as the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee in the Fifth Senedd, but with the addition of International Relations (which had its own Committee) and Sport (which was formerly in the Health and Social Care Committee remit). The Committee has set out its work programme, objectives and values in a report published in March 2022 - '**Priorities for the Sixth Senedd**'.
- 3.** The Committee has six Members who come from the different parties represented in the Senedd:
 - Delyth Jewell MS, Chair (Plaid Cymru)
 - Hefin David MS (Welsh Labour)
 - Alun Davies MS (Welsh Labour)
 - Heledd Fychan MS (Plaid Cymru)
 - Tom Giffard MS (Welsh Conservatives)
 - Carolyn Thomas MS (Welsh Labour)

Values

- 4.** The Committee has agreed that these values will be demonstrated throughout our work:
 - Promote, and be a champion for, the sectors that fall within our remit.
 - Work to ensure equality of access and participation to culture, the arts, heritage, Welsh language and sport for all in Wales.
 - Drive change by being challenging, impactful and constructive in our scrutiny.

Objectives

5. The Committee has agreed that it will seek to achieve these objectives as we deliver our responsibilities:

- Be a critical friend to the Welsh Government and their sponsored bodies, and scrutinise the delivery of the Programme for Government and Co-operation Agreement commitments. It will also scrutinise the activity of the UK Government and other relevant UK bodies relating to Wales.
- Ensure a range of different voices are heard on matters which affect them.
- Be transparent and accessible in all our activities to ensure the progress of our work is open and clear to all.

Outcomes

6. The Committee has agreed it will:

- Establish and maintain relationships with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure a diversity of voices are represented in our work.
- Ensure our work is shaped by real life experiences by meeting and learning from people on the ground from different backgrounds across Wales.
- Be accessible to all stakeholders by normalising a flexible working approach including meeting on a hybrid basis as standard.
- Provide an honest assessment of our performance by publishing an annual report at the end of every summer term; and ensure transparency by publishing a forward work plan at the start of every autumn term.

7. The Committee visited north Wales in May 2022 to receive first-hand evidence from Wrexham AFC, youth sports clubs, cultural venues, Theatr Clwyd, Plas Menai outdoor activity centre and the UNESCO World Heritage Site at the Slate Museum. Meeting people to discuss their concerns on topics within our remit in person was a valuable learning exercise which has informed the recommendations in our reports, as well as our future work programme.

8. This first annual report provides a summary of our activity and any points of learning that will influence our work in each area during the course of the Sixth Senedd.

One-day inquiries

9. In order to determine stakeholders' priorities to inform our scrutiny, the Committee held a series of one-day inquiries covering all the topics in our remit during the autumn of 2021 and spring 2022. This enabled people from the third sector, government sponsored bodies, lobby groups, unions and other interested parties to speak to Members about the challenges and opportunities they see as most important and urgent in their respective sectors.

2. International relations

10. The Committee is responsible for scrutinising the Welsh Government's approach to international relations, including the delivery of its **international strategy**, and associated **actions plans**.

11. The Committee held a one-day inquiry on international relations in February 2022. The Committee heard from a range of stakeholders, including the British Council, academics, third sector organisations and sporting bodies. They spoke about the advantages and disadvantages of the First Minister resuming the responsibilities of the previous Minister for International Relations since the dedicated post was discontinued after the 2021 elections. Stakeholders also highlighted where they have experienced positive engagement with the Welsh Government on areas of joint-priorities such as Taith and the Wales and Africa programme. Some stakeholders, however, also noted that engagement in other areas was often disparate, but that there were many opportunities to work closely together.

12. Stakeholders were supportive of the need for a 'refocusing' or a 'refresh' of some elements of the international strategy to reflect changes in the global context since its publication in January 2020, including the UK's withdrawal from the EU, the climate crisis and social justice movements.

13. Stakeholders also highlighted the need to incorporate language and culture in every aspect of the international strategy. There was a call in particular for a more strategic approach to promoting Wales' culture, including the arts, alongside Wales' participation in major sporting events abroad.

14. We held our first annual scrutiny session on international relations with the First Minister on 23 June 2022. The session focused on the Welsh Government's international strategy, the role of the overseas offices network and its approach to relations with Europe.

Next Steps

15. We will:

- continue to seek assurances from the Welsh Government that every effort will be made to capitalise economically and culturally on Wales' qualification to the World Cup Finals in Qatar;
- monitor international activities on an on-going basis and pursue matters of interest;

- hold annual scrutiny sessions with the First Minister;
- conduct regular scrutiny of other Ministers with international activity in their portfolios, such as the Minister for Social Justice, Minister for Economy, Minister for Education and Welsh Language and the Minister for Climate Change; and
- explore more detailed aspects of international relations, including those considered in the Committee's agreed **priorities and strategy for the Sixth Senedd**.

3. Communications

16. Although broadcasting and other media are reserved matters, we have chosen to carry out annual scrutiny of public service broadcasters and Welsh media. We have scrutiny responsibility for broadcasting matters within Ofcom Wales' remit.

17. We heard from public service broadcasters, academics, producers and Ofcom about the challenges facing public service broadcasting (PSB), in October 2021. This was prompted, in part, by a report and recommendations which were published by Ofcom, 'Small screen: Big debate'. Ofcom made a number of recommendations, for instance, about the need to ensure public service broadcasters had a more level playing field with streaming subscription services and that PSBs continued to receive prominence to enable them to compete.

18. We wrote to the UK Government, highlighting our concerns that moving away from a licence fee funding model for the BBC and S4C might lead to a reduction in choice for consumers, and could have an adverse impact on production companies in Wales. We wrote to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on these issues, and invited her to a meeting to discuss the challenges facing PSBs (in particular, for PSBs in Wales to compete with international content streaming services for rights to broadcast live sport, including international rugby). Although the Secretary of State has not yet been able to attend one of our meetings, the UK Government has since published a White Paper '**The Government's vision for the broadcasting sector**' which outlines proposed legislation on many of these issues.

Next steps

19. We will:

- hold annual scrutiny sessions with public service broadcasters and Ofcom Wales;
- keep a watching brief on the UK Government's review of the licence fee funding model and broadcasting White Paper; and
- continue to seek a meeting with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to discuss the impact of the UK Government's planned reforms on Wales.

4. Culture

Heritage, museums and archives

20. We are responsible for scrutinising the performance of Welsh Government and its sponsored bodies such as National Museum Wales, The National Library for Wales, the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments and the Arts Council for Wales. We also look at issues affecting the creative industries such as film and TV production.

21. In November 2021, we held a one-day inquiry on the challenges facing the heritage, museums and archives sectors. Participants called for an increase in funding for local museums, and further capital funding for National Museum Wales and the National Library of Wales. There was also a call for resources to increase digital access to collections, demand for which increased greatly during the pandemic.

Next steps

22. The Arts Council for Wales and the National Museum Wales launched a 'Widening Engagement Action Plan' in response to a review of their activities to ensure these organisations reflect the lives of all individuals and communities. We will:

- be scrutinising the delivery of these plans and
- be scrutinising the delivery of the Welsh Government's commitments to establish a Football Museum in Wrexham, a National Contemporary Art Gallery, the redevelopment of the Slate Museum in Llanberis and a Cultural Strategy.

Creative industries

23. We held a one-day inquiry into the issues facing the arts and creative industries in Wales in November 2021. We heard from Arts Council Wales, Music Venues Trust, representatives from film and television production and associated businesses.

24. We heard that 'action is vital' in delivering a long term skills strategy which is adequately funded to support potential growth and that this should be drawn up and delivered with the Welsh Government's education department.

25. Representatives reported financial losses, such as reduced attendance income and increased costs of enforcement, from the introduction of the Covid pass on entertainment venues. They wanted a full assessment of the impact of the passes. There was a call for grassroots music venues to be recognised as creative entities as well as commercial entities.

26. Those in film and television production spoke to us about the support they had offered, particularly to freelance workers, in providing online training during the lull in production during the lockdowns.

27. Those who attended the session were concerned about the potential impact of Brexit on the industry. For instance, they highlighted supply chain issues, access to funding, access to talent and additional costs and barriers for artists touring in Europe.

Next steps

- The Chair of the Committee will be holding a panel discussion at the National Eisteddfod on 'What next for arts and culture in Wales'.

5. Sport

28. Prior to the Sixth Senedd, the Health and Social Services Committee was responsible for scrutinising the Welsh Government in relation to sport, including its main sponsored body, Sport Wales. Now all matters relating to sport fall within this Committee's remit.

29. We heard about the continued impacts of COVID-19 restrictions on sports bodies and participation across all abilities and age ranges during a one-day inquiry in October 2021. Members heard that participation levels had reduced across the board, but that women, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and those aged 55+ are more likely to report engaging in 'no activity'. Participants agreed that the COVID-19 outbreak has highlighted the existing inequalities in access to sports activities.

30. Following this evidence session, we agreed to carry out an inquiry into participation in sport in disadvantaged areas. As well as hearing from representatives from a range of sports bodies and organisations, Members also visited the Plas Menai outdoor sports centre and Dreigiau'r Dyffryn gymnastics club (both in north Wales). The visit to Plas Menai provided Committee Members with an oversight of the work of the Centre as well as information on the development of the forthcoming Sport North Wales Partnership. Dreigiau'r Dyffryn gymnastics club gave Members an insight to the work of a community sports club and the challenges facing such organisations as they recover from the pandemic.

31. As part of its commitment to 'Ensure our work is shaped by real life experiences by meeting and learning from people on the ground from different backgrounds across Wales', the Citizen Engagement Team supported the Committee by facilitating a series of one-to-one interviews with grassroots coaches in Wales. The objective of the engagement was to gather the views and experiences of coaches from across south Wales who had lived experience of supporting groups of people in disadvantaged areas to participate in sporting activities.

32. The organisations with which we engaged work closely with specific audiences, including:

- Women and girls;
- Ethnic minority communities;
- People with disabilities; and
- People from a poor socio-economic background.

33. As well as nuanced issues that were relevant to specific audiences, the overarching themes which emerged throughout the engagement included:

- Cost of living impact;
- Lack of suitable facilities;
- Wider funding issues; and
- Roles of volunteers and role models.

34. We would like to thank all the groups that contributed to the inquiry, including:

- older people we met when they were playing clock cricket;
- young people with disabilities (and their parents) taking part in boxing sessions; and
- young people taking part in the 'step into sports' project.

Next steps

35. We will:

- Receive a response from the Welsh Government setting out which recommendations it will take forward and how those changes will be delivered and
- hold a debate with all Members of the Senedd on the recommendations in the report.

6. Welsh Language

36. We are responsible for scrutinising the Welsh Government's statutory duties and commitments to support and promote the Welsh language. These are set out in its Welsh Language Strategy: Cymraeg 2050. This is done via annual scrutiny sessions with both the Minister for Education and Welsh Language and the Welsh Language Commissioner, as a minimum.

37. We held a one-day inquiry into the issues facing organisations that support and promote the Welsh language in December 2021. In terms of the most pressing issues, stakeholders identified the challenges of meeting the Welsh Government's commitment to extend access to Welsh medium childcare to two year olds and the increased demand for Welsh medium early years education. Stakeholders also called for 'new and radical plans' to attract Welsh speakers to work in the statutory education sector. The need to increase and develop a Welsh speaking workforce was also raised by the post-16 and vocational education sectors. We were told that a significant challenge in the future will be supporting and promoting progression for Welsh speaking pupils into the post-compulsory education and training sector. This will require significant additional resource and support for the sector. The Welsh Government has allocated an additional £8 million over three years (2022-2025) to expand the role of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol in the post-16 sector.

38. We were asked to look more closely at the issue of language transmission from parents to children in the home, as well as opportunities to use Welsh in the community and in a social context. It was suggested that data should be collated to demonstrate the number of pupils that opted to leave the Welsh-medium education system after a prolonged period away from an immersive Welsh language environment.

39. We heard that the pandemic highlighted the vulnerabilities in the system regarding adult Welsh language learning. Demand for online learning increased rapidly during the pandemic, and replaced traditional face-to-face sessions as the default tool for Welsh for adults provision.

Scrutiny of the Welsh Language Commissioner

40. We hold annual scrutiny sessions with the Welsh Language Commissioner. In September 2021, the then Commissioner, Aled Roberts, was asked to comment on the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit on the language. The Commissioner told the Committee at the time that he was concerned that the move to home-working for many might affect those who are

less confident in their language abilities, and who may not now be able to reinforce their skills by interacting with Welsh speakers in the workplace.

41. The Commissioner commented that since the pandemic, there has been a rise in the number of second homes being purchased in rural Welsh speaking areas in particular. This risks pricing a whole generation out of living in their communities, and he called for intervention in this area, including looking at taxation policy.

42. We heard that there is a possibility that the move to remote working might enable more Welsh speakers to live and work in their communities in the 'Welsh heartlands', rather than having to move further away for job opportunities. The Commissioner called on the Welsh Government and public sector organisations to consider the language in their planning for flexible working.

43. The Commissioner also commented that there is a risk to the language from changes to agricultural policies following Brexit. Given that 90 per cent of the agricultural workforce in west and north Wales is Welsh speaking, there needs to be sufficient financial support, in particular for small family farms, to ensure the language does not decline where the viability of these farms is threatened. We subsequently wrote to the Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales to ensure the Welsh Government is aware of these concerns as they develop funding policy for the agricultural sector.

44. Following the untimely passing of Aled Roberts in February 2022, we would like to acknowledge his tireless work in promoting his country and his language, and pass on our sincere condolences to his family.

Next steps

45. We will:

- hold an inquiry into the success of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans in increasing access to Welsh medium education and
- host a panel discussion on the issue of Welsh place names at the National Eisteddfod.

7. Other activity

Legislation

46. The Committee considered the following:

- The Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Online Safety Bill and
- The Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Cultural Objects (Protection from Seizure) Bill.

Pre-appointment scrutiny

47. For the first time in the Sixth Senedd, Welsh Government Ministers and the Senedd have agreed to introduce pre-appointment scrutiny of some Chair appointments by committees in order to improve the scrutiny and transparency of the public appointment making process.

48. The Committee held a pre-appointment scrutiny session for the Welsh Government's preferred candidates for the posts of:

- Chair of Sport Wales and
- President of the National Library of Wales.

49. In response to a call for the Welsh Government to do more to increase the diversity of applicants to public appointments the Welsh Government arranged for Committee Members to have a briefing from officials from the Public Appointments Unit to hear about efforts to reach a wider audience in their recruitment processes.

Committee activity

| Date | Topic |
|-------------------|--|
| 13 September 2021 | <u>Strategic planning event</u> |
| 15 September 2021 | <u>Annual scrutiny of the Minister for Economy and the Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport and Chief Whip</u> |
| 29 September 2021 | <u>Annual scrutiny of the Minister for Education and Welsh Language</u> <u>Annual scrutiny of the Welsh Language Commissioner</u> |
| 13 October 2021 | <u>One-day inquiry into the future of public service media</u> |

| Date | Topic |
|------------------|---|
| 20 October 2021 | One-day inquiry on sport |
| 10 November 2021 | One-day inquiry into heritage, museums and archives |
| 24 November 2021 | One-day inquiry on arts and creative industries |
| 8 December 2021 | One-day inquiry into the Welsh language |
| 15 December 2021 | Strategic planning event |
| 19 January 2022 | Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2022-23 |
| 2 February 2022 | One-day inquiry on international relations |
| 2 March 2022 | Pre-appointment hearing for the role of Chair of Sport Wales |
| 16 March 2022 | Inquiry into participation in sport in disadvantaged areas Pre-appointment hearing for the role of President of the National Library for Wales |
| 4 May 2022 | Inquiry into participation in sport in disadvantaged areas |
| 19 May 2022 | Visit to Wrexham AFC, Tŷ Pawb, Saith Seren, Theatr Clwyd, Dreigiau'r Dyffryn gymnastics club, Plas Menai National Outdoor Centre, UNESCO World Heritage Site and National Slate Museum in Llanberis |
| 8 June 2022 | Inquiry into participation in sport in disadvantaged areas |
| 23 June 2022 | Annual scrutiny of the First Minister |
| 6 July 2022 | Inquiry into Welsh in Education Strategic Plans |

Reports

| Date | Topic |
|---------------|--|
| December 2021 | Response to Small Screen: Big Debate |
| February 2022 | Scrutiny of the Draft Welsh Government Budget 2022-23 |
| March 2022 | Legislative Consent Memorandum for the Cultural Objects (Protection from Seizure) Bill |
| March 2022 | Pre-appointment scrutiny of the role of Chair of Sport Wales |

| Date | Topic |
|------------|---|
| March 2022 | <u>Pre-appointment scrutiny of the role of President of the National Library of Wales</u> |
| March 2022 | <u>Priorities and Strategy for the Sixth Senedd</u> |
| June 2022 | <u>Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Online Safety Bill</u> |