

Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Diwylliant, Twristiaeth a Chwaraeon
Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref MA - P/DET/1320/18

Bethan Sayed AM
Chair, Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

17 April 2018

Dear Bethan

I am writing following the publication of the Committee's findings on the independent review of support for publishing and literature in Wales.

We are grateful to the Committee for its consideration of this subject.

Excellent work is already being undertaken across the sector. Over the last few months I have had an opportunity to witness this first-hand, as the relevant bodies continue to deliver Welsh Government priorities.

It is now vital that everyone involved is prepared to work in partnership, with openness and trust, to ensure the sector goes from strength to strength, delivering more for people across Wales.

The Welsh Government looks forward to continuing to working closely with all of the key stakeholders as we move forward.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Elis-Thomas'.

Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas AC/AM
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Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport

Written Response by the Welsh Government to the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee's findings on the independent review of support for publishing and literature in Wales.

17 April 2018

Introduction

We welcome the Committee's findings. Its conclusions and recommendations will be considered by the Welsh Government as we prepare our formal response to the report of the independent Review Panel, which we intend to publish before the summer recess.

We offer the following response to the recommendations in the Committee's report.

Recommendation 1. We recommend that the Welsh Government should publish all of the documents set out in paragraph 49 of this report and the minutes of the independent panel's meetings.

Response: Accept in Principle

In the spirit of openness and accountability, the Welsh Government provided the Committee with the relevant documents. We will publish these documents in due course. This release of evidence will of course be subject to consideration beforehand of data protection, privacy and commercial sensitivity. We will look to complete this exercise as quickly as possible.

Some of the documents referred to in paragraph 49 are the property of the Arts Council of Wales. It is therefore for the Arts Council to respond to this recommendation in the context of those documents. We will discuss this with the Arts Council and would encourage it to respond similarly.

Financial Implications – None

Recommendation 2. We recommend that the Welsh Government adopts in future an open and transparent method for appointing members of advisory panels and similar bodies, where a full public appointment process is not warranted.

Response: Reject

The Welsh Government already follows an open and transparent competitive process when appointing members of advisory panels and similar bodies.

The Welsh Government has considered the comments provided by the Committee but has no plans at present to review how task and finish group members are appointed.

It should be noted that the option of appointing a specific task and finish group via fair and open competition is already available to Welsh Ministers although it is not a requirement.

Financial Implications – None. Any costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 3. We recommend that the panel's proposals to transfer functions from Literature Wales to the Welsh Books Council should not be taken forward without additional critical analysis and consideration. The Minister should pause and reflect on our views before deciding whether to take the panel's other proposals forward.

Response: Accept in Principle

Following the publication of the Review Panel's report, the Welsh Government received detailed written representations from the Arts Council of Wales, Literature Wales and the Welsh Books Council on the appropriateness and strategic value of the report's various recommendations. My officials also held a number of constructive meetings with the senior leaders of the three organisations, to discuss the practicalities of the recommendations. The Welsh Government will consider this entire body of evidence, including the findings of the Committee, as we prepare our formal response to the Panel's report.

Excellent work is already being undertaken across the sector. The Welsh Government's response will focus on the need for the relevant organisations to work together more collaboratively, in a spirit of openness and trust, to ensure the sector goes from strength to strength.

A number of the Panel's recommendations are for the relevant delivery agencies. In line with the 'arm's length principle', I would expect the Arts Council of Wales and Literature Wales (in relation to literature) and the Welsh Books Council (in relation to publishing) to respond to those recommendations provided for their individual consideration. The Welsh Government may also need to respond to some of these recommendations, if appropriate, in its capacity as a sponsoring body for these agencies. We will discuss this with the three organisations, as needed, before finalising our response.

Eight of the Panel's 'other recommendations' are for the Welsh Government specifically. As some of these fall to other Ministers, or would require their support, I am in the process of consulting colleagues on the merits of these proposals and on any financial implications. Our response to these recommendations will be included as part of our formal response to the Panel's report. My intention is that this will be accompanied by an Action Plan, detailing the actions that we intend to take, alongside actions that the other agencies will take to support the future development of literature and publishing in Wales. I will expect to receive regular reports on progress in implementing this Action Plan.

Financial Implications – None at this stage. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.