
MUSEUMS
TASKFORCE
STATEMENT
ON FUNDING,
WALES

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Together, museums in Wales are the guardians of the nation's identity, culture and memory. They have the power to inspire and transform lives. They are popular, public institutions that deliver a range of important community benefits. They help people find their place and their values in the world. They enable communities to learn from the past, understand the present and determine the future. They create better places to live, work and visit; and inspire new ideas, debate and reflection.

Museums have received significant public funding from national and local government and this investment is paying dividends. Museums are working in partnership with local authorities and government to contribute across a range of public policy areas across the UK from culture, science, education and tourism to immigration, hate-crime reduction, international trade and diplomacy, anti-poverty initiatives, health and wellbeing and social services.

There are different business models in the sector, however the majority of museums are supported by a mix of investment that includes public funding, lottery funding, grants from charitable trusts, private funding, donations and earned income.

Museums have taken serious steps to raise additional income and reduce costs and have deployed a variety of means to become more sustainable, from the creative use of building spaces to crowdsourcing and working in partnership. All museums face the same issues of high fixed overheads inherent in what makes them unique - caring for collections and buildings and ensuring public access. To do this, museums need long-term strategic investment and consistent levels of funding.

Many local authorities continue to invest in, and work with, their museums, however financial pressure on public finances has meant that some authorities have had to significantly reduce their support. In many cases this has led to reductions in opening hours, programming and public access, transfer to others, and even closure.

There is now a tangible concern that further reductions in public finances will leave local authorities in less prosperous areas, rural areas or those with low council support unable to fund non-statutory services such as museums. In such circumstances it is museum users from the most vulnerable in society that will be affected. This is contrary to the aims of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and the tackling poverty agenda, an area in which museums have demonstrated, through the Fusion programme, that they can make a significant contribution.

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Recommendations

- There is an urgent need for Welsh Government to develop a strategic approach to museums and their funding.
- Government should continue to support and make the case for national and local public funding for museums.
- Government should encourage local authorities to engage with the recommendations of its Expert Review, specifically to fund regional working to provide and safeguard their museum services.
- Museums facing the withdrawal of local authority funding are sometimes in a position where they are forced to close before alternatives can be found or considered. Where this is the case government and strategic bodies should intervene in order that viable and strategic alternative plans can be sought.
- Lottery and government funding should be used strategically and directed towards supporting and developing the museums and galleries that already exist. This should include investment in gallery refurbishments, staffing costs and allowing full cost recovery for all museums.
- Many museums are housed in historic buildings that are expensive to maintain and in need of investment, yet do much to create local pride and identity and a sense of place. Government should work with other funders and strategic agencies to create funding opportunities to ensure refurbishment and repair, enabling museums to further exploit their assets – buildings and collections – more effectively.
- Local authorities should allow the museums that they fund to operate freely in order that they can innovate and secure new sources of income while maintaining and developing their role as public institutions and accessing support and expertise if needed. This should include the considering the possibility of: access reserves; opt out of central procurement; and have control over websites and communications.
- Government and strategic agencies should target cross-departmental funds to support partnership working at a local and national level on specific programmes encouraging working with communities, diversifying and broadening audiences and recognising the impacts museums make to education and health and wellbeing.
- Government and strategic agencies should articulate and support the case for cultural learning and learning outside the classroom with specific programmes that encourage museum and school partnerships.
- It is demonstrably difficult for museums outside of London to encourage philanthropy. Government and strategic agencies should work with the sector to develop a case for cultural giving throughout Wales.

**MUSEUMS
ASSOCIATION**

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