



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Consultation on the draft

Priorities for Culture 2024–2030



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Introduction

This document is for anyone interested in culture in Wales. At its core, it provides a policy framework for our public and culture sectors in Wales, defining the strategic direction for the arts, museums, libraries, archives, and the historic environment sectors.

Through the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, we recognise the importance of cultural well-being in improving the lives of people. One of the central goals of the Act is to create A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language, a goal which must be embedded in policy portfolios across Government, at a national and local level.

The priorities set a strategic framework for other sectors, policy areas and partner organisations who are committed to supporting and promoting culture. The cultural well-being of Wales is indivisible from our society, our environment and our economy and strategic collaboration is vital to enhance the role it plays in improving people's lives.

In this document, we use the words 'culture sector' as a term which includes the arts, museums, libraries, archives and the historic environment sectors in Wales. To support the delivery of these strategic priorities, we will continue to work in partnership with our cultural arm's length bodies, sector support organisations and act as the development agency for the local museums, libraries and archives sectors. We are not setting strategic priorities for sport or for the creative industries in Wales, however there is an expectation these sectors will consider how to respond to this document, how they will embed its ambitions in their strategic and operational planning and how they can work, in partnership, with our sectors to support, nurture and promote culture.

These priorities have been developed during a period of severe financial constraint. The public sector in Wales has been impacted by cuts in funding over a number of years and the culture sector feels fragile and vulnerable. Declining budgets, high rates of inflation and soaring energy prices have led to severely challenging financial circumstances and far-reaching consequences for those in receipt of public funding, but we are determined this should not restrict our long-term ambition. Outlining the strategic priorities for the culture sector is more important than ever. It is important the priorities and ambitions can be updated and enhanced, enabling them to respond to progress and learning and to reflect new social concerns which may emerge during the lifetime of the priorities. We commit to an initial update of

this document in 2026 and will keep it under review thereafter. Our ambition remains that culture in Wales will be thriving, properly resourced, with a long-term, strategic plan for investment.

Our values and principles

The development of these priorities has been guided by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act's five sustainable ways of working: long-term, prevention, integration, collaboration, and involvement.

These priorities recognise the importance of the Welsh language – a language that belongs to the whole of Wales, to our nation's history and culture, with a unique and significant role to play in Wales' future.

Above all, we recognise the intrinsic value of culture and commit to the principle that every person in Wales has the right to access, create, participate in and to see themselves reflected in the cultural activity of our nation.

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Our Priorities for Culture in Wales



PRIORITY 1:
Culture brings
us together

- A1: Culture is inclusive, accessible and diverse.
- A2: Cultural democracy and cultural rights are central to culture in Wales.
- A3: Culture takes an inclusive and balanced approach to interpreting, commemorating and presenting our past.
- A4: Culture is integral to place-making and community well-being.
- A5: Culture reflects the needs and aspirations of children and young people, and inspires the next generation of cultural participants and leaders.
- A6: Culture strengthens the connection between generations.

PRIORITY 2:
A nation
of culture

- A7: Culture supports and promotes the Welsh language and reflects Wales as a bilingual and multilingual nation.
- A8: Cultural well-being is deeply embedded into policy making across Wales.
- A9: Cultural engagement supports individual and community well-being.
- A10: Culture and heritage bodies will work more collaboratively to maximise the full potential of both their specialist teams and their collections, and will work with other sectors to explore and leverage the power of culture.
- A11: Culture supports tourism; tourism supports culture. Culture has a high profile in how our nation is marketed to visitors.
- A12: Culture is integrated into how Wales establishes and develops international relationships.
- A13: The profile of culture in Wales is raised, by celebrating and promoting culture at a local, national and international level.

PRIORITY 3:
Culture is
resilient
and sustainable

- A14: Our collections and historic assets are cared for, and used to support learning, creativity, place-making and cultural well-being.
- A15: Organisations responsible for the protection and care of our cultural collections and historic assets have strategic approaches to recognising significance and collecting.
- A16: Our intangible cultural heritage is an intrinsic part of our national story – it is recorded, supported to thrive, and shared with others for the benefit of future generations.
- A17: Culture is supported and enhanced by good digital practice.
- A18: Culture has a collaborative and long-term approach to research and gathering evidence.
- A19: The culture sector in Wales is a great place to work and volunteer, with a professional and skilled workforce.
- A20: The culture sector demonstrates leadership and collaboration in its approaches to sustainable development, building resilience, and tackling all aspects of the climate and nature emergencies.

PRIORITY 1: Culture Brings Us Together

Culture is for everyone, about everyone, and created by everyone – it is defined by its inclusivity, accessibility and diversity.



1.1 Bringing communities together, addressing inclusivity, diversity, and accessibility

The Welsh Government is committed to respecting, protecting and fulfilling everyone’s right to equitable inclusion in their choice of cultural activity. Many people already benefit from the positive impacts of creativity and cultural participation in their everyday lives, but barriers and challenges continue to prevent some groups and communities from fully accessing these benefits.

The Welsh Government is committed to promoting and embedding the Social Model of Disability within government and public bodies, and to removing barriers for disabled people. Hynt, the Arts Council of Wales initiative managed by Creu Cymru in partnership with Diverse Cymru, is a national access scheme for disabled customers and their carers, rooted in the Social Model of Disability. Research has demonstrated the social and economic value of Hynt, with cardholders visiting theatres 75% more as a result of the scheme¹.

We are already seeing arts organisations developing flexible programming, including pay-what-you-can performances, relaxed performances for neuro-divergent audiences, sub-titling, translation and BSL interpretation. All other areas of the culture sector also work extensively with historically marginalised and vulnerable groups to provide inclusive cultural experiences.

We want to focus on creating meaningful, inclusive opportunities for people to engage with culture, to participate in cultural activity and to benefit from the expertise and enthusiasm of our wide-ranging culture sector. We want all people to feel valued and represented in our cultural organisations. We want to address barriers to participation – whether they be physical, perceived or financial, and take action to tackle inequalities and discrimination. Many of these issues are long-standing and require a determined, proactive, and long-term approach to inclusivity and diversity which takes the lived experience of people with intersecting identities into account.

Our goal is to embed fully inclusive and equitable practice right across our culture sector. From building design to programming, through to the use of appropriate communication and workforce training, we will lay the foundations for exemplar inclusive cultural services, events, and experiences.

The Welsh Government’s Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan sets out our commitment to creating an anti-racist Wales. It recognises the historic and ongoing contributions made by Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities. The detailed actions within the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan offer a framework for transformation, with work already underway to ensure that the culture sector in Wales is inclusive and diverse.

Wales also has an ambition of being the most LGBTQ+ friendly nation in Europe as set out in the LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales.

Wales has the legislative and policy context in place to provide real sector leadership in driving forward inclusivity, accessibility and diversity. Our cultural workforce, collections, spaces and places must promote a modern and diverse Wales, reflecting the variety of people and cultures who call our country home.

Our ambition:

A1: Culture is inclusive, accessible and diverse.

1.2 Cultural democracy, cultural rights, and addressing imbalance

The Welsh Government wants the culture sector to embrace the values of cultural democracy and to support cultural rights². Alongside fulfilling its statutory responsibilities, the sector should empower communities to take the lead on what holds cultural value for them. We encourage national bodies and local authorities to value local involvement in decision-making – this should include individuals, local communities and cultural providers who are affected by decisions that are made. Decisions should be based on democratic, equal partnerships.

The principles of cultural democracy commit us to involving everyone in decision-making about what counts as culture. We want this to be reflected in approaches to creating, celebrating, interpreting and presenting our diverse culture and heritage. The benefits of sharing decision-making include higher footfall, long-term engagement and increased revenue, and contribute to community belonging and educational attainment.

The Welsh Government’s Anti-Racist Wales and LGBTQ+ action plans have highlighted the importance of adjusting the lens through which we see and interpret our past, and addressing the imbalance which has historically existed in how we have expressed and celebrated culture.

We also need to consider how our approaches to commemoration shape our understanding of the past. Welsh Government’s Public Commemoration in Wales: Guidance for Public Bodies helps public bodies make informed decisions about present and future commemoration, and to seek opportunities to create a more balanced relationship with our history.

Our ambitions:

A2: Cultural democracy and cultural rights are central to culture in Wales.

A3: Culture takes an inclusive and balanced approach to interpreting, commemorating and presenting our past.

¹ 144,000 more Theatre Visits due to Hynt access scheme in Wales. | Arts Council of Wales (<https://arts.wales/news-jobs-opportunities/144000-more-theatre-visits-due-hynt-access-scheme-wales>)

² Cultural democracy (<https://64millionartists.com/what-we-do/cultural-democracy/>)

1.3 Connecting through a sense of place

We recognise that communities have their own cultural identities, often linked to landscapes, place names, local history, buildings, objects, documentary heritage, migration, traditions, and stories. Our culture and heritage is apparent in our landscapes and townscapes, and in countless historic buildings and ancient monuments all around us. Monuments of our more recent industrial past show how Wales helped to shape the modern world, and our national parks, designated landscapes, villages, towns and cities are inspiring places where our culture and heritage is interpreted, promoted, celebrated, and enjoyed.



This sense of place is defined within the Curriculum for Wales as ‘cynefin’ where the historic, cultural and social place has shaped and continues to shape the community which inhabits it. Having a shared culture plays a key role in connecting people, in fostering local pride, inspiring communities and developing a sense of belonging. Community-based organisations, from libraries to community arts organisations, from archive services to local museums and heritage groups are encouraging and enabling people to live fulfilling, creative lives in a way which strengthens links with their local culture and heritage.

We must continue to create meaningful opportunities for people and communities to connect through culture. Culture and heritage led regeneration is powerful and transformative. Getting people actively involved in identifying and supporting the conservation of their local cultural assets, develops a sense of belonging and of pride in their community, creates a sense of stewardship, and supports community well-being.

Our ambition:

A4: Culture is integral to place-making and community well-being.

1.4 Connecting children and young people with culture

We are committed to the rights afforded to children as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities, and the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, creative, recreational and leisure activity should be encouraged.³

Children and young people are the future caretakers of culture in Wales. We want to ensure that all children and young people can participate in cultural activity and enjoy cultural experiences from an early age and on a regular basis.

Young people have told us that culture is a valuable tool in bringing the school curriculum to life, and for children and young people from economically deprived backgrounds, exposure to cultural experiences and to cultural education at school is crucial.

Our cultural organisations have inspirational and high-quality educational services, spaces, resources, and collections that are being used to support and enhance children’s education and learning from a young age. We are already working with education policy leaders to ensure there is a strong emphasis on culture and heritage in the curriculum through the expressive arts area of learning and experience and the Cynefin theme,⁴ and to help more schools experience culture first hand through cultural visits, events and activities. In our recently published A Quality Framework for Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care in Wales, we encourage practitioners to ensure that there are opportunities for babies and young children to experience and explore culture and heritage. We have heard from our sectors that they recognise the value of play. Many cultural venues contribute to local authorities’ delivery of their Play Sufficiency Action plans, such as free play and creative activities in libraries across Wales. Play can provide early opportunities to engage with and explore culture in Wales.

In 2022, the Welsh Government launched the new National Music Service as part of our Programme for Government commitment to ensuring that children and young people across Wales have opportunities to play musical instruments. Creative Learning Through the Arts, our joint initiative with Arts Council of Wales, continues to support the arts being embedded in the curriculum, and the current phase includes the ‘Creative Learning in the Early Years’ strand, focused on supporting the learning and development of 3-5 year-olds.

The Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 places a legal duty on Welsh authorities to publish child poverty objectives as part of a strategy for contributing to the eradication of child poverty in Wales. Many of our cultural and heritage organisations already offer free programmes and events which are important for tackling exclusion from cultural activity due to poverty and these must be enhanced.

Young people should feel empowered to explore their heritage and shape culture. This means influencing the way culture is formed in Wales, participating freely in cultural opportunities available, as well as being able to shape their own cultural identity. We have seen excellent practice where cultural organisations have developed opportunities for young people’s voices to be heard and for their influence and energy to be represented and valued.

Our ambition:

A5: Culture reflects the needs and aspirations of children and young people, and inspires the next generation of cultural participants and leaders.

1.5 Connecting generations

In Wales, we have demonstrated our clear commitment to supporting generations by establishing the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales, and the Older People’s Commissioner for Wales.

Future population trends project that Wales will see an increasingly older population,⁵ and in An Age-friendly Wales: Our Strategy for an Ageing Society the Welsh Government expresses a clear ambition to ensure Wales is an age-friendly nation.

We believe the culture sector plays an important role in supporting the well-being of older people, and in connecting generations. Cultural venues can support participation and keep older people connected within their communities, tackling loneliness and isolation by providing informal meeting hubs and spaces for social contact. We recognise that older people make valuable contributions to the culture sector. Many volunteer or are actively participating in projects or programmes, sharing their time, their personal stories, their expertise, knowledge and skills.

We want the culture sector in Wales to continue to value the insights and experience of all generations when planning programmes and services, and to promote the benefits of intergenerational approaches, which connect generations for mutual benefit.

Our ambition:

A6: Culture strengthens the connection between generations.



3 Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), p.10. Layout 1 (unicef.org.uk) (www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/unicef-convention-rights-child-uncrc.pdf)

4 hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/humanities/designing-your-curriculum

5 future-trends-report-wales-2021-narrative-summary.pdf (gov.wales)

PRIORITY 2: A Nation Of Culture

Culture is central to our identity as a nation. Culture supports deep and lasting relationships with others across the world. Culture is celebrated.



2.1 A bilingual and a multilingual nation

The Welsh language belongs to the whole of Wales – it is part of our nation's history, heritage, and traditions, and is key to its future. Recognising the value of the Welsh language, promoting it and celebrating it must be embedded across all areas of activity in our sectors.

The Welsh-medium cultural offer is well-established and growing. It includes arts, literature, music, and performance industries with many important partners ensuring a lively and local Welsh-medium programme of events and activities, and promoting participation. Many have told us that those learning Welsh learn faster or better when they are also introduced to Welsh language culture or taught about Welsh heritage and culture.

Our Welsh-speaking and rural communities are facing structural changes and challenges. Historically vibrant in promoting our culture, heritage and Welsh language, these communities face a constant outward migration of young people and inward migration from across the border. As a direct consequence, the sustainability of our cultural and Welsh language activities in rural and Welsh speaking areas becomes ever more difficult.

The Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 strategy has a clear ambition of achieving a million Welsh speakers and doubling daily language use by 2050,⁶ and the Welsh language should be identified as a valuable skill in the culture sector.

Welsh Government Regional Economic Plans recognise and prioritise the Welsh language, heritage and culture as an underpinning theme across key priority areas such as entrepreneurship, skills and innovation. The approach to economic development must enhance the opportunities for increased take up of the Welsh language, and promotion of our rich culture and heritage should contribute to supporting communities that are strongholds of the Welsh language, increasing opportunities to see and use the Welsh language on a daily basis.

Our ambition also recognises the cultural importance of all languages used by communities throughout Wales. Languages broaden horizons, deepen learning and understanding and open doors to new experiences. We wish to see the culture sector embracing the challenge of embedding additional languages into its programming. Developing BSL and Braille resources and experiences and responding to the linguistic needs of local communities will ensure that our sectors are as inclusive and accessible as possible.

Our ambition:

A7: Culture supports and promotes the Welsh language and reflects Wales as a bilingual and multilingual nation.

2.2 Culture and well-being

The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 includes a focus on improving cultural well-being in Wales. Culture and heritage can play a key role in how policy makers respond to the requirements of the Act, and there is growing evidence for how culture can contribute to, and add value to the delivery of wider policy aims, including health and well-being, education, tackling the climate and nature emergencies and the economy.

The positive impact of culture is evident everywhere. The benefits of cultural participation and creative activity in supporting health and well-being have long been understood. Engaging with culture through volunteering, education and training programmes, and accessing cultural places and activities can have a positive impact on health and well-being and help combat social exclusion and loneliness. Initiatives such as social prescribing provide opportunities for many people disconnected from culture to broaden their horizons and benefit.



6 Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers (gov.wales)

The culture sector should not work in silos. Stakeholders have expressed a clear desire for more collaborative working, and a proactive approach to strengthening existing relationships and establishing new partnerships. For example, there are clear opportunities for Cadw and Amgueddfa Cymru to share expertise and develop joined-up approaches to the management of historic monuments and cultural collections in the way they are presented, cared for and promoted. This would be in line with key recommendations of the governance review of Cadw in 2023. The review also encourages similar opportunities for the integration of functions between Cadw and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales.

There is already good collaborative working between many areas of the culture sector and other sectors, including health and social care, Natural Resources Wales, national parks, sport, tourism and private sector businesses. These efforts are resulting in dynamic and creative partnerships, knowledge sharing and joint funding approaches. Through partnership working and new collaborations, we want to explore more cross-sector working in particular with areas such as health, education, economic development, tourism, the natural environment, tackling poverty and social justice.

Our ambitions:

- A8: Cultural well-being is deeply embedded into policy making across Wales.**
- A9: Cultural engagement supports individual and community well-being.**
- A10: Culture and heritage bodies will work more collaboratively to maximise the full potential of both their specialist teams and their collections, and will work with other sectors to explore and leverage the power of culture.**



2.3 Cultural tourism

Tourism is a major contributor to the Welsh economy. It is a fast-growing sector that generates jobs and business opportunities right across the country, including in remote and rural areas. Wales is widely recognised as a place of adventures, of world and Welsh heritage, outstanding natural landscapes, accommodation that is also an experience, mouth-watering food and drink, and a rich calendar of local and global cultural events.

We want Wales’ culture and heritage to continue to play an important role in Welsh tourism and for it to be embedded in how we promote Wales to the world. Aspects of Welsh culture and heritage, such as our World Heritage Sites, have the potential to attract international audiences and are already acknowledged as being of universal significance. Ancestral tourism presents a significant attraction for those travelling to Wales to undertake family history and genealogical research, as well as visiting places where their ancestors lived and worked.

Welcome to Wales, the tourism strategy for 2020-25 identifies the three S’s as the three key challenges – Seasonality, Spend and Spread. We want to grow tourism for the good of Wales and the culture sector can support this by driving visits in the off-season and to less frequently visited parts of our wonderful country, encouraging visitors to stay for longer and spend more. There are many opportunities to ensure the whole visitor economy – from accommodation, hospitality, attractions, events and the night-time economy – plays a role in promoting culture within our nation and to the world.

The National Events Strategy for Wales ensures Welsh culture and language is visible at events in Wales, helping to tell the stories of Wales to residents and visitors alike. It seeks to deliver a greater sense of ‘Welshness’ at events, whether they are home-grown or international. Linking culture to tourism and events is at the heart of integrated place-making. We will ensure that this approach continues to gain momentum. Sustainable approaches to tourism development and events remains a key guiding principle. The Welsh Government promotes economic growth on a level with environmental sustainability, social and cultural enrichment and health benefits both for people who live and work here and for people who come to visit.

Our ambition:

- A11: Culture supports tourism; tourism supports culture. Culture has a high profile in how our nation is marketed to visitors.**

2.4 Cultural Relations and Cultural Diplomacy – Wales and the World

Projecting Wales to the world is particularly important as the UK forges new international relationships. The International Strategy, published in 2020 sets out the Welsh Government’s vision to raise Wales’ profile on the international stage.

Promoting Wales’ culture and heritage, and developing cultural relations through the exchange of cultural, creative and artistic practice and experience should be integral to how Wales develops formal and informal relationships with other regions and countries. This includes ensuring that Wales’ cultural relations are values-led and meet the global responsibility goal of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

We recognise the importance of investing in artistic and creative talent and want to encourage ambition that enables our specialist practitioners, artists and creators to gain international recognition, and become cultural ambassadors which benefit Wales far beyond the individual, group or production. This will include projecting the Welsh language onto a global stage, supported through the Welsh Government’s many Memoranda of Understanding with other regions and countries across the world as well as through its thematic “Wales in…” years which focus on a different country annually.

The Welsh Government’s network of international offices, our high profile international cultural events, sporting diplomacy, and cultural relations partnership working with strategic stakeholders and co-investors are already strengthening Wales’ international presence. The brand and profile of our national cultural and heritage organisations also have a role to play in promoting Wales and in developing the profile of Wales abroad.

We must continue to build on the momentum achieved through the adoption of a collaborative Team Wales approach in recent years, seeking new opportunities to cultivate the growing interest in Welsh and Celtic culture and ensuring that the breadth and diversity of the culture sector is reflected in Wales’ cultural diplomacy activity. By working together with strategic partners on an agreed approach to cultural relations, Wales can develop its cultural diplomacy ambitions and continue to extend its reach.

Our ambition:

- A12: Culture is integrated into how Wales establishes and develops international relationships.**



2.5 Celebrating culture

Culture is central to our distinctiveness as a nation and to our sense of being Welsh. We can embrace our history, heritage, languages and traditions while also welcoming the new, creating a constantly evolving sense of nationhood through culture.

Wales is fortunate to have a deep and broad cultural and creative offer that we should celebrate, enjoy and share with others.

St David’s Day continues to be a key feature of our cultural calendar. Celebrating our patron saint should offer diverse, inclusive and fun opportunities across Wales and for our diaspora communities, enabling everyone to be collectively, individually, and uniquely Welsh.

Established international celebrations such as World Book Day, World Heritage Day and European Heritage Days, and newer celebrations such as European Folk Day offer valuable hooks for showcasing aspects of Welsh culture. Local and national celebrations and events provide opportunities for people to support culture, with examples such as Dydd Miwsig Cymru offering a day of lively celebration whilst also promoting Welsh language music and exemplifying how the live music scene contributes to the night-time economy. Culture is worth celebrating, and we must continue to seek and create opportunities across the year to celebrate culture in Wales in all its variety.

Our ambition:

- A13: The profile of culture in Wales is raised by celebrating and promoting culture at a local, national and international level.**

PRIORITY 3: Culture is Resilient and Sustainable

Wales’ tangible and intangible assets are identified, cared for, and managed to the highest standards.

Culture has a strong and robust workforce, anchored in expertise.

Culture demonstrates collective responsibility and a strong response to global concerns.



3.1 Caring for our cultural places and collections

Caring for our historic places and collections requires an understanding of their special qualities and depends on specialist skills, legislation, regulation and guidance, and funding.

The passing into law of the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023 marked a significant moment for the protection of historic places in Wales. The Act enshrines in law the effective protection and management of our unique historic environment.

Regulatory and advisory services need to be supported at national, regional and local level to ensure that all historic asset owners have access to the information and advice they need, and that statutory authorities have the expertise and resources to deliver the obligations of the Act. Owners of historic assets are custodians of our past and have a vital role in helping to protect our heritage for future generations. Alongside technical guidance and support there is a need for continued investment to ensure conservation and maintenance of our unique historic buildings and monuments, particularly those in public and community ownership, which contribute so much to our cultural identity and tourism economy.

Challenges exist around the storage of collections. In 2023, the Welsh Government commissioned a review that sought to identify improvements for collections management, reduce costs for cultural organisations, support decarbonisation of collections storage, and improve access to collections for researchers and the public. There is a need for continued and strategic capital investment to support the safe storage of our collections, and to create welcoming, inspiring spaces where the public can interact with collections.

Conversations are required with Wales’ collections experts about developing a national collections policy, exploring the idea of a dispersed national collection and how we support contemporary and active collecting. Our approach to collecting should reflect best practices in the sectors and ensure that all aspects of culture in Wales are represented, and our collections and historic assets should be leveraged to inspire creativity, support learning, place-making and cultural well-being.

We also recognise the importance of our intangible cultural heritage. Oral and folk traditions, skills, social practices, rituals and festive events are transmitted from generation to generation, and we support the UK signing the UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Our ambitions:

A14: Our collections and historic assets are cared for and used to support learning, creativity, place-making and cultural well-being.

A15: Organisations responsible for the protection and care of our cultural collections and historic assets have strategic approaches to recognising significance and collecting.

A16: Our intangible cultural heritage is an intrinsic part of our national story – it is recorded, supported to thrive, and shared with others for the benefit of future generations.

3.2 The power of digital

The amount of content held in digital format is increasing exponentially. This includes content which is ‘born digital’ and physical items which have been digitised for the purposes of preservation and access. Digital services are also being developed across the sector and users now expect to be able to use digital services to access content and services on-line, to order tickets for events, join in on-line activities, watch live-streamed events, order and renew library books and resources, download e-books and e-audio, visit a virtual museum, contribute to culture as ‘virtual’ volunteers, and enjoy digital interpretation at our heritage sites.

The development of digital technology, including emerging AI capabilities, will continue to transform the culture and heritage sector, opening-up access to our cultural assets and enabling many more people to engage with cultural collections and activities.

To date, digital developments have often been undertaken by individual organisations working in isolation. The development of cultural priorities offers an opportunity to review the state of our digital development and formulate a more strategic, collaborative and co-ordinated approach to the opportunities and challenges of operating in the digital world.

Creating, Managing and Preserving Digital Content

Digital content is vulnerable and fragile. It can be rendered inaccessible by technical obsolescence, is at risk of being lost or corrupted, and cultural organisations can be subject to damaging cyber-attack. We must protect and care for our digital culture and heritage as carefully as our physical heritage by ensuring that we create high quality digital content capable of long-term preservation and stored securely.



Investing in, and building a sustainable, robust digital infrastructure alongside our physical infrastructure, and strengthening the foundations of our digital services, in line with the ambitions of the Digital Strategy for Wales, will ensure our sectors can develop world-leading and secure digital offers.

The capacity to develop and offer digital services already varies between organisations across Wales and there is a risk of creating an even sharper digital divide. Our most secure content is curated by organisations with established strategies, processes and procedures which adhere to standards and best practice. By developing trusted, shared digital repositories, we can secure Wales’ digital heritage and ensure it is open and accessible. We will encourage organisations that have more developed digital skills to work with smaller organisations to enable them to care for born digital collections and digitise their existing collections.

Digital Skills

We need appropriate digital skills at all levels, from front-of-house volunteers using ticketing software, specialists in the field of digital humanities, archivists and curators with expert knowledge of digital preservation standards and best practices, to leaders who can develop strategies for digital developments based on an understanding of audience trends over the next ten years.

New Technologies

Our sectors need support to innovate and to grow their digital capacity. Digital platforms and spaces can offer powerful ways of connecting to culture and of engaging with cultural programming. We want to strengthen the use of new technologies to enhance how people connect with and create culture in Wales. The culture sector has adopted digital technologies to build and manage world-class collections, provide greater public access to collections, and increase engagement with communities within Wales and across the world. However, using new technology carries a carbon cost, and we must be mindful of the energy costs and carbon footprint of maintaining digital content.

We will encourage organisations to ensure their investment in technology involves sustainable energy consumption and minimal carbon emissions, as well as informed choices around the gathering, processing, storage, and distribution of data. Finally, we will work with sectors to understand the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in their fields, to build in support for organisations, and to understand how sectors could innovate through the use of AI and any potential risks emerging from the use of this technology.

Digital Connectivity

By hosting cultural content online, we can connect communities across Wales, and highlight the best of our varied culture to the world. Digitised collections, exhibitions and performances, as well as born-digital content, can offer people across Wales the opportunity to engage in culture that would otherwise be inaccessible. We can replicate historic sites which are not physically accessible in digital formats and translate exhibition text into any language.

Great strides have been made in relation to digital connectivity, but we still face a stark, intersectional digital divide. Many people are unable to access digital cultural experiences or simply prefer to engage with culture in-person. Further, among our cultural organisations a divide exists between larger bodies with the resource, equipment, capacity and skills base to digitise, and smaller, particularly local, organisations without these assets. We must ensure people in Wales can access cultural assets offline, but we must also ensure our organisations are supported where necessary as they continue to create digital content.

Our ambition:

A17: Culture is supported and enhanced by good digital practice.

3.3 Investing in Research

In 2023, the Welsh Government commissioned a review of the existing evidence base for the culture sector in Wales. The report highlights the need for a more comprehensive and cohesive approach to gathering data and evidence across our sectors to support sector development and to inform effective decision-making.

There are examples of good evidence gathering practice such as the Museum Spotlight survey that provides deep insights into the Welsh museum sector and establishes a critical evidence base on which to develop policy. This level of data is required for all areas of the culture sector in Wales, and should be collected consistently, to enable robust evaluation of our outcomes and impact. Effective and engaging dissemination of key research findings will allow the sector to plan more efficiently for the future.

Wales has a strong research community, including our higher education sector, who enjoy long-standing successful relationships with UK national research bodies and funders. Continuing to develop links with research partners to strengthen the focus on culture and heritage in Wales, and

develop a national research agenda, should be a shared objective between the culture sector and higher education. Our cultural spaces and collections should also support community-led research.

Our ambition:

A18: Culture has a collaborative and long-term approach to research planning and gathering evidence.



3.4 The Culture Sector Workforce

Culture is an important source of employment, with a range of skills and professional expertise required to deliver cultural services. The cultural workforce is varied and constantly evolving, ranging from individual practitioners through to large multi-site organisations. Each element of this complex ecosystem contributes to the health and resilience of the whole.

The Welsh Government works with social partners to promote fair work and how it contributes to social justice, well-being, and improved organisational performance. We encourage employers in Wales, including across the culture sectors, to adopt behaviours and practices consistent with fair work, including through accreditation as Living Wage employers, and we continue to promote the importance of trade unions in the workplace, recognising that they contribute to improving the experience of work, worker voice and representation.⁷

In 2022, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport identified over 14,500 workers employed

in the arts, museum, library, and archive sectors.⁸ This figure does not include volunteers, who are a significant feature of the culture and heritage workforce, nor does it include employment figures for the heritage sector, which was estimated to employ 30,000 FTE jobs in Wales in a study carried out in 2010 (Valuing the Historic Environment).

Freelancers and portfolio workers are key features of the culture sector workforce, and there needs to be a collective, strategic approach to developing and sustaining freelancers in both the culture and creative sectors. This should include a commitment to supporting Wales-based freelancers where possible, to improving skills development and working conditions, and to growing our understanding of the freelance workforce in Wales through better data collection.

Improving equality, diversity and inclusion across the workforce at all levels continues to be a clear goal, as does addressing pay differences in relation to gender, ethnicity and disability. We would encourage the development and use of inclusive recruitment guidance to help the sectors achieve this goal.

Some areas of the culture sector are wholly reliant on volunteers, including independent museums and grass roots arts and community heritage organisations. We recognise the importance of volunteers and the benefits volunteering can bring.



Many of our sector organisations have well-established volunteer policies and principles around voluntary working and this learning could be shared more broadly across the sectors, but a gap exists in how the culture sector recognises the efforts of volunteers, and there is currently no cohesive, cross-sectoral approach to promoting voluntary opportunities. Motivations for volunteering are changing and recruiting and retaining volunteers can be a challenge. To address this, the culture sector will need to be flexible and evolve volunteering support as part of attracting and retaining new volunteers.

It is important that we work with the further and higher education sectors in Wales to ensure that appropriate teaching and training is in place to meet the needs of the culture sectors. Student placements increase work experience and employment opportunities for students while aiding organisations to learn from the latest research, build capacity, and attract new talent into the workforce.

There are specific skills shortages in the culture sector – these range from specialist builders familiar with the needs of historic buildings through to digital skills, specialist librarians, curators, archivists and conservators, and carbon and climate emergency specialists. The arts sector is finding it increasingly difficult to source technical support for stage productions and other specialist skills. The heritage sector in Wales needs a strong supply of skilled archaeologists, conservators, heritage management specialists and construction companies capable of maintaining our historic assets and the wider historic environment. Whilst we recognise the short-term financial constraints, we are determined that we should protect, prioritise and nurture the development of these skills during the lifetime of these strategic priorities.

Stakeholders told us that there are challenges to attracting Welsh language skills into the sectors in some areas of Wales, and to supporting specialist staff to continually develop their professional skills and keep up-to-date with new technological innovation, especially when staffing levels are fragile.

Developing a skilled workforce requires careful and deliberate planning over an extended period of time. Creating a more robust network of specialists requires creative thinking and partnership working. We must consider succession planning and find new ways to attract and keep specialist skills in Wales. We must also be future focused, ensuring we are planning for our sectors’ future workforce needs as well as addressing the current challenges.

Our ambition:

A19: The culture sector in Wales is a great place to work and volunteer, with a professional and skilled workforce.

3.5 Culture and Sustainable Development

Culture is a driver for sustainable development. Through creative approaches, culture can enhance the public’s understanding of the climate and nature emergencies, broadening our knowledge and perspectives about its complexity, encouraging behaviour change, and developing creative solutions to stave off the worst consequences of climate change. Sustainability must now be embedded as a golden thread running through the heart of what we do.

In 2023, Welsh Government commissioned work to establish how the culture sector could reasonably achieve compliance with the net zero legislation in a cost-effective manner, which is appropriate for their circumstances. By reviewing the culture sector’s current approach to achieving the net zero targets and their activity on tackling the climate and nature emergencies, we will identify and provide the appropriate tools and targeted, relevant incentives to enable sector stakeholders to improve their contribution to global well-being. In gathering a solid evidence base of activity, we can learn from good practice taking place across the sector and implement wider positive change.

We need to build resilience in the sector to manage the impact of a changing climate. Storms and floods have resulted in damage and loss of assets. Long term trends such as hotter, drier summers, a longer growing season, rising sea levels and increasingly extreme weather events will potentially have the greatest impacts on the historic environment, on the survival of vulnerable heritage assets, and on the delivery of events and services. The long-term preservation of collections will be affected by a greater prevalence of pests and our ability to stabilise fluctuating temperatures and relative humidity in internal environments.

Welsh Government is building on the collaboration and action achieved across the sector through the delivery of the 2020 Historic Environment and Climate Change in Wales Sector Adaptation Plan and its successor. The Welsh Government aspires to take a whole-system approach to our climate resilience plans, with the aim of addressing the combined, interdependent actions needed across different policy areas and stakeholders to build climate resilience.

Our ambition:

A20: The culture sector demonstrates leadership and collaboration in its approaches to sustainable development, building resilience, and tackling all aspects of the climate and nature emergencies.



8 Economic Estimates: Employment in DCMS sectors and Digital sector, January 2022 to December 2022. - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)



How we developed these priorities

Developing strategic priorities for culture in Wales is a Programme for Government commitment. We promised to engage deeply and meaningfully with the arts, culture, and heritage sectors in developing the strategic priorities.

In 2022/23, as part of developing these priorities, we engaged with representatives of the culture sectors in Wales, and with community representatives, digital experts, staff at our national cultural bodies, social partners and policy makers to deepen our understanding of the challenges faced by the sectors in scope and to understand their aspirations.

We shared an early draft of this document with a limited number of sector stakeholders for their feedback, and in 2024 we undertook a public consultation on the priorities.

A Steering Group monitored the development of this document.

Our Ways of Working

Welsh Government has developed these strategic priorities in accordance with the sustainable development principle in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. We have looked into the long-term, involved people, collaborated with partners, considered how we can prevent problems and ensured an integrated approach. These ways of working will continue as we implement the priorities.

“

Culture is for everyone,
about everyone, and
created by everyone.

”

Priorities for Culture and the National Well-being Indicators

The table below demonstrates which National Well-being Indicators of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, the priorities and our sectors can support, reflecting the sustainable development principles and making progress towards the well-being goals.

How these priorities will contribute to national indicators:

	Culture brings us together	A nation of Culture	Resilient and sustainable
15. Amount of waste generated that is not recycled, per person			●
16. Percentage of people in employment, who are on permanent contracts (or on temporary contracts, and not seeking permanent employment) and who earn at least the real Living Wage			●
17. Pay difference for gender, disability and ethnicity	●		●
19. Percentage of people living in households in material deprivation	●		
22. Percentage of people in education, employment or training, measured for different age groups			●
23. Percentage who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area	●		●
24. Percentage of people satisfied with their ability to get to/ access the facilities and services they need	●		
26. Percentage of people satisfied with local area as a place to live	●	●	●
27. Percentage of people agreeing that they belong to the area; that people from different backgrounds get on well together; and that people treat each other with respect	●	●	
28. Percentage of people who volunteer	●		●
29. Mean mental well-being score for people		●	
30. Percentage of people who are lonely		●	
35. Percentage of people attending or participating in arts, culture or heritage activities at least three times a year	●		
36. Percentage of people who speak Welsh daily and can speak more than just a few words of Welsh	●	●	●
39. Percentage of museums and archives holding archival/heritage collections meeting UK accreditation standards		●	
40. Percentage of designated historic environment assets that are in stable or improved conditions			●
41. Emissions of greenhouse gases within Wales			●
42. Emissions of greenhouse gases attributed to the consumption of global goods and services in Wales			●
46. Active global citizenship in Wales		●	
48. Percentage of journeys by walking, cycling or public transport	●		●
50. Status of digital inclusion	●		