



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

REPORT

# Tailored review of the National Library of Wales

A review of the Library's performance, governance and effectiveness of its services.

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# Contents

1. Introduction
2. Background to the National Library of Wales
3. Findings, Comments and Recommendations
4. The Welsh Government's relationship with the National Library
5. National Library of Wales' Governance and the Role of the Board of Trustees
6. The National Library: effectiveness and efficiency
7. External Engagement: the attitude of its audience towards the National Library

# 1. Introduction

This review is the first of the tailored reviews of Welsh Government sponsored bodies. The Tailored Review replaces the previous approaches to reviews, to ensure a more balanced, flexible and collaborative approach. The recommendations and suggestions in this review are brought to the attention of the National Library and the Welsh Government for consideration. The review was conducted by an independent panel, and based itself on the methodology suggested by the UK Cabinet Office in '**Tailored Reviews: Guidance on Reviews of Public Bodies**'.

In producing the report, 'Delivering Together: Strengthening the Welsh Government's Sponsorship of Arm's-length Bodies' report, the views of Chairs and Chief Executives were sought on the principles of using tailored reviews. There was overwhelming support for a programme of reviews providing that the reviews were planned, undertaken on the basis of a risk assessment and proportionate to the size of the organisation. Chairs were keen for the Welsh Government to move away from narrowly scoped reviews relating to relatively insignificant topics that tended to harm the body's long-term reputation. Without exception, they supported a tailored review programme of which they were given advance notice, which would provide a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the body concerned.

Overall, everyone welcomed the idea of having a challenge panel to consider any reports and the Chairs and Chief Executives felt that it was a good self-reflection exercise and an opportunity to learn lessons.

The National Library of Wales (NLW) is the first arm's length public body to be the subject of a Tailored Review in Wales. The remit for the review has been agreed by the Welsh Government and NLW, with the Welsh Government's Public Bodies Unit facilitating the work. Welsh Government, in agreement with NLW, appointed an independent panel to conduct the review, and this report

summarises its conclusions.

The report considers whether the Library's constitutional structure is appropriate and whether the Library's performance is effectively and efficiently managed and monitored, so that the Library can continue to be a viable and sustainable body. The report assesses the body's performance and considers the appropriateness of the processes in place for further assessments in the future.

This report considers the efficiency of the National Library's governance framework, the effectiveness of its services, the appropriateness of the Library's current constitutional and legal status, and how it should prepare for the challenges it faces over the next ten years.

The report also considers the Library's role as a national institution that can offer leadership and professional services to the Welsh libraries and archives sector and considers its status as a national library of international importance. November, 2019.

A user survey of the Library was also commissioned by the Welsh Government's Corporate Research Branch to gauge the expectations of the Library's services, and the nature of the Library's interaction with the public.

Three workshops were held with stakeholders in Cardiff and Aberystwyth. Key documents were assessed, including previous reviews of governance and management, and 33 interviews were conducted with staff and members of the Library's Board, including managers with responsibility for managing and financing the Library, archivists and librarians in Wales, as well as representatives from other art and heritage organisations (a full list of interviewees is available in Appendix 3).

The panel members were Aled Eirug (Chair), a Senior Lecturer at Swansea University, Efa Gruffudd Jones, Chief Executive of the National Centre for Learning Welsh, Emyr Williams, Chief Executive of Snowdonia National Park

and Rheon Tomos, accountant and governance consultant.

The panel would like to thank the Board members and staff of the National Library of Wales, Welsh Government staff, and those who gave their time to contribute to the review in interviews and by providing written evidence.

## 2. Background to the National Library of Wales

The National Library of Wales was established by Royal Charter on 19 March 1907, at the same time as the National Museum of Wales. Supplementary Charters were consented which introduced minor changes in 1911 and 1978. On 19 July 2006, a **Supplementary Royal Charter and New Statutes** were consented that set a governance structure with a single tier Board of Trustees, instead of two tiers (Court of Governors and Council). Appointments to the Board are now shared by the Welsh Government and the Library. The constitution and governance have been modified to reflect the fact that governance of culture is devolved to the National Assembly for Wales.

The Library is also a registered charity, regulated by the Charities Commission. The Library is designated as a one of the 'sponsored bodies', which are non-departmental bodies directly funded by the Welsh Government. The Library's cultural contribution is acknowledged by the Welsh Government, as well as all the stakeholders who participated in our consultation. It fulfils its role and obligations by balancing the objectives in its Charter with its charitable status and its commitment to providing long-term public benefit.

In addition to being one of the six legal deposit libraries in Britain and Ireland, the Library is also a huge archive and information resource. By law, publishers of all print publications in the United Kingdom must provide a copy to the British Library, and to any of the five other depository libraries that request it, and this arrangement includes material published digitally and online. There is a

consensus of opinion among all consultees of the report that the Library is a cornerstone of Wales' cultural and material heritage, illustrated by those documents that have been recognised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as being of international importance and amongst the most important documentary treasures in the world.

The National Library of Wales is located in Aberystwyth and is Wales' main library and archive and is a treasury for the nation's recorded heritage. Its core function, as described in its Royal Charter, is 'to collect, preserve and give access to all kinds and forms of recorded knowledge, especially relating to Wales and the Welsh and other Celtic peoples, for the benefit of the public, including those engaged in research and learning.' These objectives are delivered by collecting materials through legal deposits, purchases, gifts, legacies, exchanges; protecting and caring for the collections; providing public access to the Library's collections and services, and information about them; and raising awareness of the library's work and collections and disseminate information about them.

The collections include:

- 7,000,000 feet of film
- 250,000 hours of video
- 6,000,000 books and newspapers
- 40,000 manuscripts
- 1,500,000 maps
- 150,000 hours of audio
- 950,000 photographs
- 60,000 works of art
- 1,900 cubic metres of archives - many of the collections are digitised and can be viewed online.

Since its establishment, the Library has continued to collect and preserve the

documentary heritage of Wales, in various forms and media. It has also interpreted the historical and cultural legacy by holding events and exhibitions and has stimulated learning and research.

The Library is one of the most prominent arm's length public bodies in terms of its use of the Welsh language as an operating medium within the institution and beyond, and the Welsh language is an important part of its identity and character. It is also an exemplar employer in providing opportunities to learn Welsh in the workplace and its contribution as a model for using Welsh in the workplace is exceptional amongst the Welsh Government's arms' length bodies and contributes fully to the Welsh Government's 'Strategic Objectives, **Welsh language 2050: a million speakers**.

The National Library faces substantial future challenges, of which the foremost is the threat to its financial viability. The prospect of declining income is made more difficult by the challenge of maintaining and safeguarding the institution's capital resources, including the estate and the information technology infrastructure, whilst at the same time ensuring the relevance of its services in a digital age, in order to reach a wider audience.

We heard a warm appreciation of the Library's cultural contribution from discussions with group members and interviewees, and no evidence was received during the review that the Library's legal and constitutional status should be changed.

The Library's geographical position in Aberystwyth is both a strength and a weakness. An important element of its contribution as a national institution is that it shows that it is not necessary to be located in Cardiff to be a national body that proves its value for the people of Wales. But that also means that the Library has a particular challenge with regards to reaching the population of Wales as a whole, and ensuring that its services are available to as many people as possible, including those who are unable, or who have difficulties travelling to Aberystwyth. Whilst the digital availability of library materials is a

great help for the Library to be more accessible, Aberystwyth's distance from Wales' main populated centres means that a special effort is needed for the Library to reach the communities of Wales.

## **3. Findings, Comments and Recommendations**

### **3.1. Form and function**

Based on the evidence presented to the panel, the Library's constitutional status should not be changed.

The panel did not see any conflict in principle between the Library's objectives as a charitable body, and the specific duties involved in being a body that is also sponsored by the Government. Comments were sought regarding the appropriateness of the Library's Royal Charter, and its appropriateness for a national body in Wales in the twenty-first century. However, the Library and a number of interviewees were of the opinion that the Charter was a sign of the institution's unique importance, and that it provides an unequivocal mandate for the Library's national and international status. The Welsh Government respects the Library's independence, and should there be a desire to change the Library's constitutional status, it would be necessary to secure changes in the Privy Council, and we could not recognise any advantage for the Welsh Government or the National Library in doing so.

### **3.2 The National Library of Wales' relationship with the government**

We recommend that urgent attention should be given to the Library's financial needs and that the National Library should outline its suggestions for adequate budgetary provision over the next five years to the Deputy Minister for Culture,



Sport and Tourism, in order to explain how it can deliver on its core objectives. We recommend that Welsh Government should review the National Library's funding requirements on the basis of that report. The review panel does not consider the current situation to be sustainable.

We believe that an understanding of the capital requirements for the conservation of the building is needed, and that the Library should proceed to develop a prioritised and costed long term maintenance programme.

We believe that the Library has the potential to support many more of the Welsh Government's public policy objectives, given the necessary funding for implementation. In addition, we recommend that the Government's Sponsorship Department facilitates discussions with other policy departments within the Government to attract sources of funding to support additional programmes.

We recommend that the Library develops its response to implementing the Well-being of Future Generations Act as part of its corporate objectives, and that it utilises networks such as the Public Leaders Forum, to refine its response to the act.

We believe that the Library should further develop its relationship with the National Museum of Wales and other relevant culture and heritage partners by establishing a memorandum of understanding that will address collection policies, and share expertise with regards to fundraising, marketing and engagement.

We believe that the Library should continue to develop a relationship with Historic Wales to promote collaboration and share expertise.

We recommend that the Welsh Government brings stakeholders together to develop a digital collections strategy for Wales. Such a strategy should include consideration of the contribution of the National Library and local libraries and archives and higher education alike.

### 3.3 The Library's board and governance

We recommend that business plans be submitted for each project that will incur a significant amount of expenditure, say of more than 5% of the Library's annual expenditure, and any development not included in the Library's business plan at the beginning of the financial year, as a matter of necessity.

We recommend that the Board's papers make it clearer who is responsible for implementation of a project/initiative, and the timeframe thereof with a clear audit and reporting trail.

We recommend that the induction procedure for trustees be implemented within six months of the commencement of their period of service.

A structured system of reviewing the trustees' performance should be implemented annually by the President drawing on the feedback from fellow board members, as well as members of the Executive Team.

The President's performance should be reviewed annually, drawing on feedback from Board members and members of the Executive Team.

The President and the Chief Executive and Librarian should continue to meet formally with the Deputy Minister, together with the relevant Welsh Government Director and/or Deputy Director, at least bi-annually to discuss the Library's strategic development.

We recommend the Board to assess its own effectiveness, and that of its committees, every three years, undertaking regular skills assessments and development evaluation. Further we suggest that external expertise should be brought in to advise the Board on its skills development. We suggest that mentoring schemes be developed with board members from other arm's length bodies in Wales.

It is recommended that a review of the effectiveness of the Board's assurance register framework is undertaken twice a year, and that this is a standing agenda item at each board meeting.

We suggest that Trustees be appointed for a period of four years, with a mandatory advertising process for new appointments. A skills audit should be conducted beforehand to recognise skills gaps amongst Board members.

We believe that the Library should consider paying members of the Library's Board of Trustees, partly to try and attract candidates from more diverse backgrounds, but also to acknowledge the responsibilities of Board members.

### **3.4 Effectiveness and efficiency**

We urge the National Library to focus on developing a strategic plan that addresses its viability every five years, ensuring that all new projects emanate from its core mission.

As the Library considers its Strategic Plan for the 2021-2026 period, consideration should be given to the Library's current staffing structure, in order to ensure it reflects its strategic priorities. For example, this could include looking at diverting staff from the Library's traditional services to working in digitisation.

The structure of the current Executive team should be reconsidered, to reflect the need for greater expertise and capacity in developing an external engagement programme, and expertise in digital technology. We also suggest that the Executive Team considers how diversity could be improved amongst the Library's senior officers.

The Library should consider the potential of sharing storage resources in the future with other bodies such as the National Museum. This is also a strategic issue to consider for the Sponsor body of the Museums, Arts, Archives and

Library sectors, and the Library should consider what its contribution would be to this.

The Library should consider what systems have been adopted in other legal deposit libraries in relation to charging for services and consider cost recovery for work that is not part of the Library's core activities.

The future of the café and shop should be reviewed in the context of value for money to the Library and the value to the public. Other options should be considered for offering this kind of provision in the future, including a business assessment of outsourcing the current service as well as on-line sales of product through other agencies or partnerships.

### **3.5 External engagement**

We recommend investing in external engagement and comprehensive outreach schemes, including the redevelopment of the Library's website and digital infrastructure.

The National Library should consider initiating a programme to take out its exhibitions in Aberystwyth throughout Wales, in collaboration with local galleries, archives and libraries.

We suggest that the Welsh Government offers support and advice to the Library to develop its commercial provision, in partnership with other bodies relating to heritage in Wales.

Greater priority should be given to working with schools and sourcing additional resources to contribute fully to the creation of resources to aid teachers in the delivery of the new Curriculum.

We recommend that the National Library's role be given further consideration in

relation to local libraries and archives in Wales specifically, taking into account how the Library could develop its specialist role in the sector.

We recommend that the Library develops a formal partnership with suitable post-16 education bodies to develop joint funding applications and projects, similar to the recent applications. This could include being recognised as an independent research body, which could lead to projects being created in collaboration with higher education bodies in the future.

We recommend that the Library considers extending the model of electronic legal deposit presence, based on Cardiff University's Library's model to other institutions to provide access to the Library's non-print deposit material, in collaboration with higher education institutions' libraries, local libraries and arts centres.

To help the Library realise its potential as a visitor destination in Mid Wales, consideration should be given to commissioning a report in collaboration with the Welsh Government and local partners, such as Ceredigion Council, to explore the possibilities of developing the Library as a visitor destination. We suggest that as part of its study, the Library's opening hours should be considered so that it is more accessible to visitors on the weekend.

We note that in the last decade, no review has been undertaken into the Library's economic significance. We suggest that a similar study be undertaken to assess the Library's current economic contribution and the Library's potential for its future economic contribution.

## **4. The Welsh Government's relationship with the National Library**

The remit letter is the annual basis for the relationship between the Library and

the Government.

In line with the recommendation made in Welsh Government's report 'Delivering Together', the Government aims to establish agreements with arm's length public bodies over a five-year period. This aims to provide greater assurance for budgetary financial planning and business planning across financial years within the Assembly term. The intention at the start of a new Government term is that Ministers would confirm the funding for the first year, but also where possible, suggest the size of the budget for the remaining four years. In proposing indicative funding, it would be clear that the level of funding could reduce or increase depending on the Government's priorities, or changes to Ministerial portfolios, budget fluctuations, or concerns regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of the public body.

This new approach, aims to improve partnership working, clarify accountability and develop a shared understanding of the outputs and purpose of arm's length public bodies. We are confident that there will be less administrative burden on arm's length bodies, Welsh Government officials, and Ministers in removing the need to produce and agree on annual business plans and remit letters.

The Library's independence of the Government is recognised by the Royal Charter and its charitable status. For 2020-21, together with the Library's core work, the Library is asked to consider 7 priorities, and the Library is reminded of the Government's strategic direction as set out in 'Prosperity for All' and its international strategy:

- Maintain the focus on attracting new members, improving the visitor experience and increasing income.
- Plan for the redevelopment of the Library's public areas.
- Plan for Gregynog Gallery, whilst meeting the standards for national bodies.
- Search for an opportunity to strengthen the National Library's research activity and research partnerships, including partnerships with higher education and post-16 institutions.

- Ensure and maintain the long-term sustainability of the National Broadcast Archive.
- Offer a proactive response to the Culture, Sport and Tourism sector's national activity, such as the developing a strategic plan for libraries;
- Support Visit Wales' thematic campaigns and the 'Year of Discovery'.

Furthermore, the Library's responsibilities flows from the **Government's strategic document, 'Prosperity for All'**. The remit letter requires the Library to increase access to NLW collections, services and resources, and to continue efforts to increase contribution, inclusion and connection, to provide cultural opportunities for people from all walks of life. This is implemented by the Library under the Fusion scheme, which currently provides an opportunity to encourage and increase a wider range of diverse audiences in two areas, namely Carmarthenshire and Gwynedd. The Library is asked to develop and deliver formal learning programmes in line with the new Curriculum for Wales; to secure funding for research and working in partnership with higher education sector institutions; to continue to create digital learning resources for Hwb, to search for opportunities to work with community audiences across Wales, thereby increasing the opportunities to work with young people. In terms of health, the Library is asked to continue and expand its volunteering scheme, and to engage with the Welsh Government's Loneliness and Isolation agenda.

The Government asks the Library to commit to the **Government's new International Relations strategy** as part of the culture and heritage sector's contribution, and to create a cultural impact. We feel that there is an opportunity for the Library to be an important part of Wales' international appeal, using the wealth of its treasures to promote Welsh Government connections, and that of international bodies such as the British Council, in various locations across the world. It has already developed links with notable universities such as Harvard and Stanford Universities in the United States.

This review considers the nature and efficiency of the relationship between the National Library and the Welsh Government. Serious concerns were raised

regarding the Library's management situation during the 2015-2016 period, and the Government took an active interest in the Library's governance and financial management.

We note that the Welsh Government now wishes to give greater autonomy to the Library, and that the Library would welcome this. It is inevitable, as it is responsible for funding approximately 93% of its annual income, that the Government would be keen to have a strong element of overseeing the activity, including investment and construction policy, and the use of funds.

Despite hearing concern from the Library that the Government intervened too much at times, we believe that the Government's interest in being involved in the Library's investment decisions, capital schemes and new developments is to be expected.

The example of the BBC's National Broadcast Archive's project development is significant. From its inception, by digitising and providing access to the BBC's unique radio and television material in Wales, dating back to 1923, this imaginative project will provide access to the collection at the Library in Aberystwyth, and at 3 'Clip' centres in the Carmarthenshire, Coleg Cambria in Wrexham, and Cardiff University's Journalism Department. The public will be able to access the BBC Archive and the Library's archive material at these centres, and 1500 digital clips will also be provided on the Library's website. The initiative is funded by the Lottery Heritage Fund, the Library and the Government, and the archive is donated to the Library by the BBC. It can be argued that this is the Library's most significant effort to reach new audiences over the last decade, and it is hoped that the project will be able to continue beyond 2024, when the funding from the Lottery Heritage Fund will come to an end. The Library has stated that it will ensure the continuation of the project beyond 2024, and that it will be integrated into the Library's core work.

It was brought to our attention that the discussion regarding funding the scheme post 2024 is challenging considering the wider context of the Library's financial



situation. It is inevitable that such an ambitious scheme represents an element of risk and indeed the Library's Board will need to monitor the development continuously. We believe that the Government's effort and concern in trying to gain a better understanding of the implications of the intention to establish a national broadcast archive was appropriate and necessary and has added real value to the viability of the project.

There is evidence of a close relationship between the Government and the Library, but it is felt that the relationship could be developed further. Like all other public bodies, the Library receives no assurance on budgets over the medium term, and normally only for one year at a time. The Library has challenges to deal with relating to staff costs, pensions, and salary levels, which add to the complexity of modelling their funding. Factors such as these are historical and difficult to resolve but, unaddressed, they could lead to greater staff retention difficulties for the Library, especially in posts related to information technology.

It is important to ensure that the NLW is financially sustainable. Both the Welsh Government and the Library acknowledge that this has been difficult in recent years, partly due to the financial pressures the Welsh Government has been under, and the Government's inability to make longer-term commitments for more than one year. There has been a discussion regarding the Government's aspiration to offer support for the duration of the term of Government, if possible.

Tension has arisen between the Library and the Welsh Government over the financial allocation. It is clear to the panel that there is frustration, and clearer communication is needed to improve mutual understanding. In considering both parties' comments, the panel believes that they need to consider the following:

- the need for an agreement between the Library and the Welsh Government as to what core work the Library is expected to achieve to protect the heritage assets they care for on behalf of the nation;
- the need to provide a valuation of the core work and to set a sustainable

baseline to sustain that work. That is to lay a basis for the core work, where both parties agree to maintain it.

- There should be an understanding of what financial resources are needed to protect and develop the digital collections for the future and to identify opportunities to share the Library's unique materials online. We believe that the Sponsorship Department should work with the Library to ensure maximum impact in Wales and beyond
- The need to develop a programme where the Library and its relevant partners fulfil the Welsh Government's policy requirements which would also enable the Library to deliver against its well-being objectives. To do this successfully, the Welsh Government will be required to facilitate communication with departments across the Government on policy issues across portfolios.
- The need for the Library to demonstrate to the Welsh Government what is being achieved with the grant. We believe the Government and the Library need to agree on outcomes and how they should be measured. These outcomes should be based on the agreed baseline budget to fulfil its functions under the Charter, and also based on the needs outlined in the Government's remit letter.
- The need to understand the capital needs for a period of at least ten years, and that this needs to be supported by a longer term costed maintenance programme. The pressure is not only on the sustainability of the revenue grant, but also on deficits in the capital funding given the challenge they face in terms of the estate, information technology and the Library's developmental needs.

The Library is a nominated body under the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Library is asked to integrate this into the Library's operational plan. The Future Generations Commissioner's office was of the opinion that the Library had initially been slow to respond to their request for a self-assessment of their work under the requirements of the Act. We recommend that the Library develops its response to implement the Well-being of Future Generations Act as

part of its corporate objectives, and that it utilises relevant networks such as the Public Leadership Forum and the Futures team in Welsh Government, to refine its response to the act. Looking to the future, we believe there is an opportunity for the Library to use activity related to the main objectives of the Act to promote the Library's work.

A prosperous Wales; a more resilient Wales; a healthier Wales; a more equal Wales; a Wales of cohesive communities; a Wales that has a vibrant culture, where the Welsh language thrives; and an internationally responsible Wales

The Library is also subject to the Welsh Language Standards, and as one of the few bodies who operate primarily through the medium of Welsh, it is an important example to the rest of the Welsh public sector. We recognise the Library's particular role as a Welsh language champion within the sector, and we encourage the Library to work with other bodies that are covered by the standards to support the development of expertise in the use of the language among Welsh public bodies.

We believe, due to the nature of the National Library's function, that the President needs to be able to communicate fluently in both Welsh and English from the outset. Appointing someone who cannot communicate with the Library's audiences in both languages could impact on the Library's and the Welsh Government's reputation. This is a particularly important skill for this role and we recommend that on that basis the requirement for the post should be that the successful candidate should be able to communicate through the medium of Welsh.

Reference was made to the inequality in staffing between the National Museum and the Library. We accept that the Museum, with its seven distinct sites and

particular commercial needs, is very different in nature to the Library, but the comparison with the Library is striking as the same responsibilities rest upon one part-time person, along with the Chief Executive. The Museum has 7.3 staff members who are responsible for fundraising, membership, corporate support; preparing applications for institution trusts; legacies and individual donations.

It became apparent from our interviews that there is an opportunity for the Library to draw upon the expertise of its fellow members from the Historic Wales network. We believe in particular that the Library should further develop its relationship with the National Museum of Wales by establishing a memorandum of understanding that will address collection policies, develop a vision for exhibiting contemporary art, and share expertise in terms of fundraising, marketing, engagement and research.

The Library's concern was noted that its voice is not sufficiently heard when considering opportunities to attract additional funding from the Welsh Government in particular. We therefore believe that the Culture and Sport Division should discuss with the Library how it could work with other departments such as Education and Skills, Health and Housing departments and Local Government to develop the National Library's services in the context of the Government's wider policies. The Sponsorship Department plays a key role in ensuring that those bodies in their care such as CADW, the Museum and Visit Wales work in partnership together, and also work with other departments to promote the Library's services.

It is recognised that Wales's national public art collection is primarily held by the National Museum of Wales and the National Library. We recommend that the Welsh Government co-ordinates the development of a strategy to give clear direction and the necessary funding to maintain and add to Wales' art collection and the required necessary storage spaces for art and paintings for the National Museum and the National Library.

## 5. National Library of Wales' Governance and the Role of the Board of Trustees

The National Library of Wales' governance arrangements reflect its status as a charity, as well as the guidance given to bodies in receipt of public funds. In the Corporate Governance Framework document (February 2017, updated in February and August 2018), the body's governance responsibility rests with the Library's Board. It is noted that the Trustees who are members of the Board, according to its Charter, are 'responsible for the governance, strategy, financial and asset management of the Library, and meets on a regular basis to conduct its business, either as a full Board or in its committees'.

In the document, particular attention is paid to the functions of the Board of Trustees, and alongside the Framework, there are Regulations (February 2017, amended in February 2018) which set standards of governance to be followed in the day to day work of the Board and its committees.

Evidence was seen during the review that the Library has addressed the development of the Governance Framework, with confirmation that there was a clear understanding of the requirements and guidance. The current arrangement is that the Board meets five times a year and asks the committees in accordance with their terms of reference, to be convened between the Board meetings. This is considered an effective way of giving specific time to issues before reporting back to the Board, with the Board having the final say unless the committee has been given delegated powers.

There are currently three standing committees: Audit and Risk; Financial Planning; and Governance and Performance. The last two committees were created following reviews by Price Waterhouse Coopers on behalf of the Board of Trustees (March 2015), and Wales Audit Office (February 2016). Establishing the Audit and Risk Committee is required under the Library's Royal Charter

statutes. There are two other working groups that meet occasionally and have Trustee representation; one that deals with property and construction issues, and the other discusses income generation opportunities.

The regulations stipulate that the Audit and Risk Committee must meet at least four times a year, and the other two committees must meet at least three times. It was observed that some meetings had been postponed during 2018/19 due to members' lack of availability, despite committee dates being arranged some months in advance. In addition, Library staff have been struggling to obtain information or confirmation from some Board members, which has led to frustration in terms of arrangements. There were gaps in the numbers of trustees during this period. However, many other public bodies operate with fewer members, and the committee work does not appear to be extremely heavy. We suggest that consideration be given to facilitating meetings via video-conference, to enable members to be available without having to travel to Aberystwyth every time for meetings. We understand that this is permitted by the Supplementary Royal Charter and the amended Statutes in 2013 and we suggest that the technology be used to ensure members' attendance.

Following discussions, the Library decided not to instigate any changes to current Committee arrangements until after this review. One area under consideration is the dissolution of the Governance and Performance Committee. The Committee was established in response to reviews of failures in the body's arrangements, and the issues have subsequently been addressed by Wales Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee. As the National Library has since carried out the majority of the actions stemming from the recommendations made, officials now feel that there is not enough work to justify retaining this committee, and that there is no purpose in retaining it.

We recommend that the Library's Board consider the following elements prior to the dissolution of the Governance and Performance Committee:

- Full consideration should be given to how to relocate the committee's

‘performance’ work. It is noted, for example, that the committee has a role in reviewing the performance of the Board of Trustees. The performance of the Board and the institution is a matter for the whole Board, rather than a committee, and consideration should be given to how this will be planned and completed without input from the committee.

- Consideration should be given to how governance reviews will be carried out in the future. The Audit and Risk Committee has an important role in supporting the Accounting Officer on an annual basis, and we believe consideration should be given to whether specific additional responsibility will fall on it following the dissolution of the Committee. If any matters raised during the committee period remain unresolved, this needs to be addressed at the right level to ensure that none of the recommendations are lost.
- Consideration needs to be given to the change in terms of the Board of Trustees’ schedule. The implications of the change will need to be assessed as well as scheduling implications which stem from this report.

The Financial Planning Committee provides an opportunity to the Trustees to pay particular attention to current issues, as well as medium term issues. We welcome the committee's decision to appoint external members for their expertise.

We note in particular that the Board's papers are not always clear regarding the outcomes of reports submitted by officials, nor do they set officers’ reports as separate items in the Librarian/Chief Executive's report. We suggest that every Board meeting continues to receive a report from the chief finance officer, and includes a report on strategic implications, as well as the financial impact of all decisions taken, and the opportunity cost following any decision. It is not always clear in the Board papers whether a decision is required by the Board, or whether the item in question is a discussion topic, or an item to note. We therefore suggest that the Board’s agenda clearly identifies the nature of the item, the person responsible for actioning the item in question, its long-term financial impact, and how it contributes to the development of NLW’s strategic targets.



Even though there is a process in place to self-assess and discuss the individual Trustees' performance, and a follow-up conversation with the President, not everyone took part in the process last year. It also appears that the process has been relatively informal. This means an opportunity was missed not only in terms of the individual's development, but also in providing a timely platform to discuss issues relating to the effectiveness of the Board and the Committees, which could also be an opportunity to respond to any concerns or recommendations.

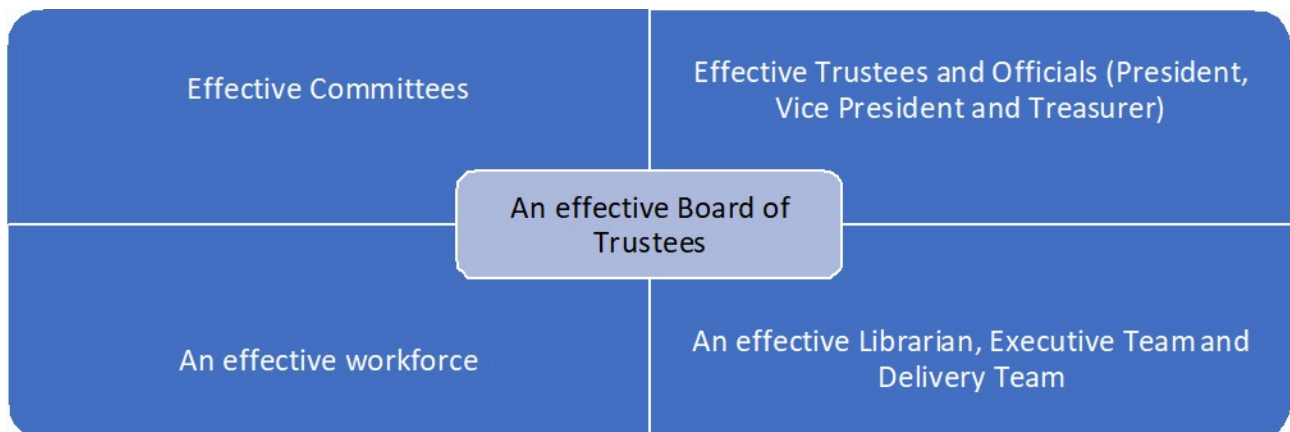
We understand that a training plan has been developed for the Trustees, but there is an opportunity here to revisit the programme. We recommend that an induction procedure is developed for trustees and implemented within six months of the commencement of their term of office. Support needs to be provided to all new Trustees and especially to key Board members such as the President, Vice-President and Treasurer for the first year. We suggest that an annual review of training and development should be undertaken by the President as part of an annual performance review.

We understand that in 2019 a performance appraisal of the President was conducted by the Director of Culture, Sport and Tourism. In other bodies, further steps are often in place to develop the assessment process and combine this with an assessment of the effectiveness of the Board and committees, including a 360° assessment by the Executive Team. We recommend putting in place a more formal procedure for evaluating the President's work, using feedback from Board members and members of the Executive Team. We recommend that the President also meets formally with the Minister at least once every six months ((with the Director of Culture, Sport and Tourism, or the Deputy Director of Culture and Sport, and the Chief Executive and Librarian in attendance) to discuss the Library's strategic development.

As noted above, the Governance and Performance Committee's work programme includes a review of the effectiveness of the Board of Trustees, although this process has not taken place to date. A number of other bodies



regularly assess the effectiveness of their meetings and combine this with the performance of the individuals who contribute to the work. It is also good practice to invite an external review every three years or so. We recommend that the Board of Trustees carries out a complete assessment, taking account of the following:



At a recent Trustees' meeting in November 2019, it was agreed that the Board should focus more on strategic issues and not spend too much time on the operational aspects of the Library's work. We welcome this intention and are confident that this will have a positive effect on the arrangements of the Board and committees, and that particular attention will be given to the importance of prioritising discussion time. Many public bodies use the 'away days' approach to allow more time to discuss important developments such as strategy. The National Library has held similar sessions to this occasionally, but consideration should be given to allocating more specific 'development' time in the future. We suggest that mentoring schemes be developed with board members from other arm's length bodies in Wales. We recommend that an annual skills audit should be conducted, and that an external assessor should be engaged to advise the Board on its skills requirements.

The Board received a strategic report from the Chief Executive and Librarian in November 2019 providing a picture of the significant plans or projects which

were considered to be important to the Library's development. The next step ought to provide thorough business plans for these developments to be able to prioritise how to invest effectively in the future. We believe that a similar situation to the decision to develop the BBC Archive, where it appears that the Board did not have a clear picture of the medium- and long-term financial implications of the scheme, should be avoided. Several comments were made during the review that the documentation for the project prepared at the time was overly optimistic and superficial and that the financial risks had not been effectively and fully presented to Board members.

We recommend that business plans be submitted for each project that will incur a significant amount of expenditure, say more than 5% of the Library's annual expenditure, or any development not included in the Library's business plan at the beginning of the financial year, as a matter of necessity.

The Trustees should question positively and constructively, as well as assess whether what is before them is adequate in terms of assurance. Over time, it is possible to collate an assurance register to assess whether there is evidence that the body is effective.

The internal auditors reported earlier this year that there was no specific clarity as to who was responsible for managing certain risks, and that this could hinder the achievement of the Library's strategic objectives. We now understand that this has been addressed, however we wish to emphasise the importance of managing risks not only to provide assurance but also to raise awareness of improvements or potential opportunities in the future.

Board members play an important role in meeting the requirements of the Charter and that of Welsh Government. Members seem to be able to balance these two aspects, but to sharpen considerations at Board level perhaps they should consider appointing more members as champions for different elements that need to be considered e.g. fundraising, marketing and digital development. The role of a champion at this level is to be a conscience for the field in all

discussions at Board level and we are aware that many members are already fulfilling this role. We encourage Trustees to develop this aspect of their work.

The Royal Charter allows the Board to include between 10 and 15 members. There are currently 15 members of the Library's Board, of which eight were appointed by the Welsh Government in consultation with the National Library, while seven were appointed by the National Library in consultation with the Government. The procedure for public appointments as outlined by the Commissioner for Public Appointments is followed at all times. These posts are appointed for a four-year period, and are unremunerated. The President and Vice President are appointed by the Government, but in consultation with the Trustees. The Treasurer is appointed by the Library in consultation with the Welsh Government. There is no apparent difference between a Government appointed Trustee function and one appointed by the Library once the appointments have been made. We believe that both institutions should continue to work together to make the appointment process as effective as possible.

The appointment of three new members of the Board in January 2020 is to be welcomed and has improved the member's gender balance, so that the membership is 9 men and 6 women. The concern for diversity should not only focus on gender, and both the Library and Trustees alike recognise the need to attract candidates from diverse backgrounds, ensuring a range of geographical locations and representation from disadvantaged communities. We suggest that Trustees be appointed for a single period of office of four years, followed by a public advertisement, to ensure an open and consistent process. If a Trustee wishes to serve another term, he/she should compete for the role in open competition.

So far, the body, like many other public bodies, has resisted the idea of paying its trustees for their service. The Library pays expenses to the Trustees, and the Government's **Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for Welsh Government appointments** considers the subject of the payment of Trustees. We were told that remunerating Trustees does not necessarily solve the problem of attracting

more diverse candidates, but it could help. There is a tendency in other bodies to revisit their approach to paying members, especially if this means an increase in the choice of strong applications that support diversity. The Library and the Government alike are concerned that there is so little diversity in the current Board, despite efforts to attract candidates from more diverse backgrounds.

The Library is free to pay Trustees under the Royal Charter, as long as it is authorised by the Charity Commission for England and Wales. We accept that this is not a straightforward matter and that opinion is split on the payment of board members, but we believe that offering payment would be a means to attract candidates who would not otherwise consider applying for a Trustee position.

## 6. The National Library: effectiveness and efficiency

The Library has experienced difficult financial times over the past ten years, with income decreasing steadily between 2007-2008 and 2018-2019, representing a real reduction of 40%. During the same period, the Library's staff numbers saw a significant 23% drop:

	2007-2008	2018-2019
Grant in Aid	£9.969m	£9.585m
Staff numbers	290	224

The Library has also been through a very difficult period in 2014-2015 with an employment tribunal case, which found that two members of staff had been

unfairly dismissed, a serious fire in the building, and the Librarian's resignation in August 2015. Since then, the Library's management has stabilised, and it has responded positively to the recommendations in the Wales Audit Office report (December 2016) and the Government's concern regarding its management. It has now addressed the vast majority of Wales Audit Office recommendations on governance and financial management.

However, the main finding of the report still holds true for the Library:

“ In particular, the Library recognises that the use of reserves to balance the budget cannot be sustained and that it will need to generate additional income or continue to deliver further savings' (Wales Audit Office, 2016). ”

It is recognised that the Library is constrained by aspects of the Welsh Government's financial arrangements, and the consequence of the gradual decline in financial resources over the past ten years is that the Library has focussed increasingly on its core function of collecting and curating material, whilst the focus on reaching the people of Wales, and the resources needed for marketing and engagement has diminished.

The panel has considerable sympathy for the National Library's situation with regards to its capacity to be strategic in its effectiveness. The effectiveness measures achieved over the last decade have been in response to significant annual cuts in core funding, despite a significant increase in demand, linked to the growth of digital resources.

There was a recurring theme during panel interviews with Library staff, namely, that the institution has reached a point in its core funding where there is no longer room to make significant savings without strategic decisions being made regarding the prioritisation of services. Indeed, many felt that they were increasingly under pressure to meet their work targets and that there was no

scope to sustain any further developments.

We received confirmation during our review that the Library had carried out an additional exercise two years ago to assess whether its departments' core revenue budgets were adequate, and also to predict where there would be future financial pressures. It was reported that, in the absence of a similar increases in the Government's core grant, the Library would be reliant on the use of reserves to finance a percentage of the budget. Indeed, a pay award in 2017 resulted in a budget deficit of £177,000, and this has now reached £777,000 in 2020/21. In addition, it was reported that the increased pension costs could increase the deficit to £1.167 million, which is likely to drain the reserve altogether.

Thus far, the Library's Board has authorised allocating some of the reserves to fund the budget deficit, and this includes the public funds as well as contributions from the private funds. Another decision made by the Board during 2019 was that it would earmark £250,000 on an annual basis to fund any additional revenue cost to support the National Broadcast Archive service after 2023/24. The costs of developing this scheme are partly funded by the BBC and the Lottery Heritage Fund grant until 2023/24.

The NLW's private reserve (over £11 million) is currently significantly higher than that of other legal deposit libraries, including the Library of Scotland, and as a result the income from investments derived from the reserve is a significant boost for the body. Nevertheless, as already noted, significant demands are likely to be made in the medium term which may result in a reduction to the total reserve if there were no further legacies. In its medium-term financial report, the Library anticipates that this reduction could be between £3.5 million and £7.2 million by 2024. The Board has dealt with financial challenges in the past by withdrawing funds from reserves, but it is believed that this source will not be available to the same extent within 4-5 years. Board members, should consider the reserves policy regularly.

In addition to current revenue funding pressures, the Library anticipates that up to £26 million in capital funding is required to carry out necessary maintenance, to add to storage space, to develop the front courtyard, and to improve the building's systems to reduce carbon yields. In addition to this, it is necessary to invest in NLW's digital infrastructure systems. The Library has received a third of the necessary sum over the last four years as follows.

Note: £500,000 of the £605,000 IT figure in 2017/18 was transferred from building capital.

Year	Building capital	IT	Total
2017/18	£1,800,000	£605,000	£2,405,000
2018/19	£3,000,000	£105,000	£3,105,000
2019/20	£1,000,000	-	£1,000,000
2020/21	£2,300,000	£400,000	£2,700,000

One of the NLW's concerns, similar to many similar bodies, is that it is difficult to plan in the long term because funding is allocated on an annual basis. We understand that there are historical barriers that impact on the Government to commit to funding exceeding more than a financial year, and the current proposed changes to a Term of Government Remit arrangement which gives firm annual budget and indicative budgets for the following four years is encouraging. The NLW also has a number of schemes that may change aspects of its work and there will be further developments in what it proposes. It is therefore a period where all the Library's strategy and funding will need to be re-examined, and inevitably it will be necessary to re-examine its priorities. Every opportunity should also be taken to hold discussions with the Government to



clarify the significance of any additional investment.

The Library's performance was compared with that of other legal deposit libraries, including the National Library of Scotland and the British Library. It is difficult to benchmark between the different libraries due to the different levels of funding, with the Library of Scotland receiving a budget of £15.280 million (2017-18) per annum and the British Library receiving £97 million (2020-21). Unlike the Library of Scotland and the British Library, where staff receive the Civil Service pension, with a 20% contribution from the Libraries, the NLW is responsible for all its staff pensions, and the additional cost of the Library's pension scheme is estimated to increase to £390,000 per annum for 2020/21.

Much of the data for the other two bodies are based on the measurement of outputs similar to the number of digitised documents rather than the result of the impact of the work. We strongly advise that the deposit libraries work together to develop common metrics, to allow more meaningful benchmarking.

The Panel considered internal and external aspects of the National Library of Wales' effectiveness.

Internal:

Due to a series of budget reductions, the Library has cut back significantly on its staff numbers. Alongside this, in 2014, the Library's Executive Team reduced its size from six to its current complement of three. This alone is not a huge problem for a body provided that the wider team which supports the strategic development and governance is working effectively. But the comment was made more than once during the review that there was concern regarding capacity, and the expertise of the Executive Team (as well as the supporting group of managers) in terms of giving the full necessary attention to the whole range of the Library's work including promotion, digital developments, marketing and fundraising. Given that the Library has a vision of further extending its reach, this is a barrier unless adequate resources are put in place. We believe that it is



therefore timely to re- consider the current management structure, to consider the need for more expertise in engagement, and most urgently digital developments. It is a concern not only that the Executive team is small but also that it does not include individuals with recent experience of working outside the Library. We suggest that any new senior post to the Library's Management Team should be advertised externally. We suggest that the Executive team also considers how the diversity of the Library's senior officers and Delivery Team could be improved.

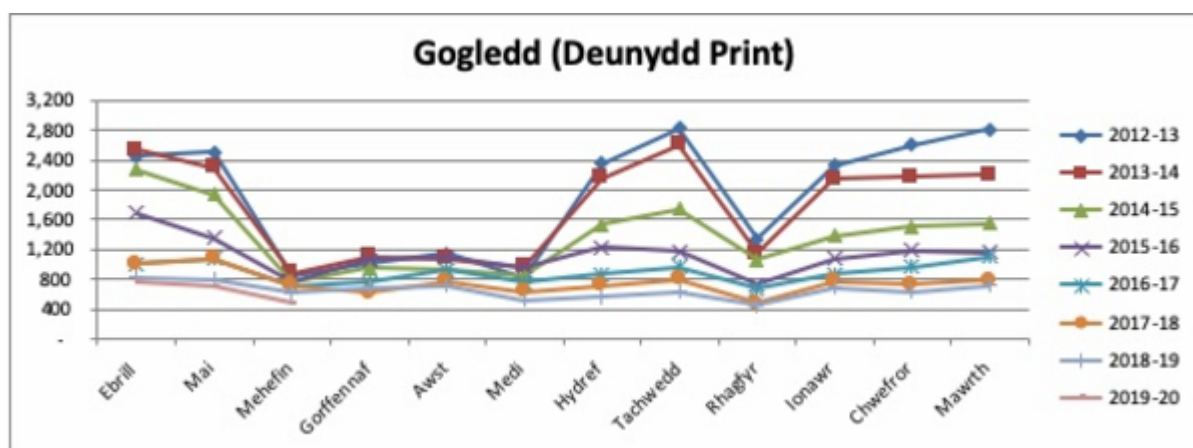
The Library has been forced, due to financial pressures over the past ten years, to improve its internal efficiency, but as noted in the Wales Audit Office report in 2016, the financial plans were not sufficiently integrated with the Strategic Plan at that time, and the financial pressures have increased since then. Many were of the opinion at the workshops and interviews that not much more would be possible in terms of further internal effectiveness. This is based on the assumption that the Library will continue with the current activity. However, the panel feels that the Library has not considered reviewing its activity sufficiently to consider whether the nature of current services is suitable and appropriate. It was felt that there has been no desire in the past to consider the role of some of the Library's services, and that elements of the Library's work appear to be completely unchanged despite changes in user behaviour. For example, two reading rooms are kept open for manuscripts and print material, although user numbers have declined by 54% over a seven-year period, from 31,189 in 2012-13 to 14,240 in 2018-19.

User Statistics on Reading Rooms from 2012-13 onwards



- *Gogledd - North*
- *De - South*
- *Cyfanswm - Total*

#### Gogledd (Deunydd Print) - North (Print Materials)

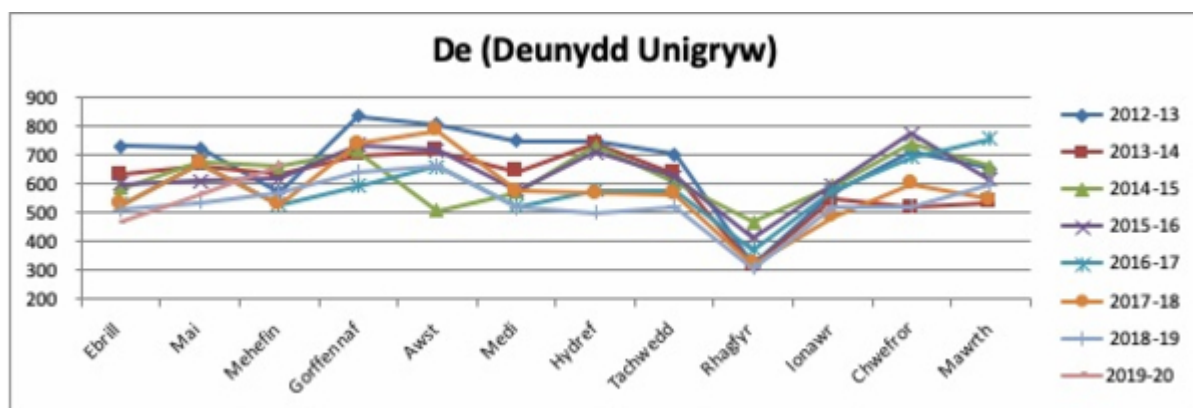


Ebrill - April

Hydref - October

Mai - May	Tachwedd - November
Mehefin – June	Rhagfyr - December
Gorffennaf – July	Ionawr – January
Awst - August	Chwefror - February
Medi - September	Mawrth – March

De (Deunydd Unigryw) - South (Unique Materials)



The statistics for access to the Library's services via digital media contrast markedly with the level of use of the reading rooms. The number of people connecting to the Library's digital sites increased from 1.26 million in 2015-16 to 1.65 million in 2018-19, an increase of 31% for that period. The reading rooms remain a key component of the Library's service but the implications of the imbalance between the use of diminishing resources, and the element of digital service, which is now the most accessible way of engaging with the Library, are clear. It seems to the panel that there is at least an opportunity here to consider diverting staff from the reading rooms' services, to work on the digital side.

The Library is trying to achieve everything it was doing at the start of the period of financial austerity as well as the additional requirements that arise through the annual remit letter from the Welsh Government. To enable the Library to truly consider its effectiveness, it needs to have a better understanding of the strategic direction and the resources that are available. As the Library has had to

prioritise the protection of its core services, it has inevitably failed to sustain its desired range of services. We feel it is the inevitable consequence of this financial pressure that has caused the Library to be less focussed on its engagement work.

Staff members, the Executive Team and Board members acknowledged the need to look at the structure of the institution and its range of services. There are some specific areas where the Library finds difficulty in delivering on its aspirations. Primarily, we believe that these areas to be centered around engagement; developing the education service; information technology; estates expertise, fundraising capability, and the ongoing programme of digitising resources.

There was also evidence of some slippage on the project work programmes that receive funding outside the core GIA. We received feedback that the high quality of work is maintained but that timescales can vary. The implication of this is that the Library has to divert resources for a period of time to complete projects and to keep within grant conditions. Improving project management skills across the body, and developing the skills to make more realistic bids, would enhance the Library's ability to manage its resources more effectively, and consequently its ability to prioritise.

The Library has reviewed its back-office costs. The back-office capacity has been reduced through efficiency measures and it is encouraging that the standard of service has been maintained. The Board should consider the impact of this on staff in terms of their responsibility toward staff well-being, and also in terms of the resilience of services within the Library. The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales has now been relocated within the National Library, and back office support is provided, as well as location support.

We believe that the challenge for the Board now is to set a strategic direction, and ensure that resources are prioritised to achieve this. The Library has dealt

with constant financial challenges over the past ten years. We believe that the Board now needs to undertake a fundamental strategic review of its priorities, rather than review its effectiveness based on current need.

During the review, the Library expressed a desire to be involved in developing two ambitious projects, namely the need to establish a national archive for Wales, rather than sending Welsh Government papers to the National Archive in Kew, and to contribute to the creation of a contemporary art gallery for Wales. The national archive project is dependent on primary legislation, and the decision to create a Contemporary Art Gallery is currently being considered by the Welsh Government. Both projects are uncertain, so we would encourage the National Library to prioritise the development of a five to ten-year viability strategy, rather than focussing on and trying to secure projects that are not central to its core mission.

Largely due to the policy of not making compulsory redundancies during the last decade of funding cuts, the current staffing and management structure does not correspond with the Library's strategic priorities. Apart from the future of reading rooms, in a number of other areas, such as the need to increase the digitising of the collections, attracting additional commercial income, and increasing the Library's appeal for visitors, we believe there is an urgent need to consider reassessing the Library's strategy and the delivery of the Library's services.

The Library has agreed with ITV Wales to look after the company's television archive and has received funding for this. However, we were very shocked by the current relationship with ITV Wales, where we understand that two members of staff from the Library are expected to serve the company by searching the company's archive free of charge, and we recommend that the Library will be renegotiating its agreement with the company.

## External

For a number of years, the historic bodies of Wales have been working together under the Historic Wales banner. The co-operation that takes place between the bodies is to be applauded. Staff 'peer' groups between various public bodies are invaluable. Joint training and purchasing programmes are to be applauded. We suggest that this should also extend to develop the skills of trustee members who serve on various boards on issues they have in common. We note that the Public Bodies Unit also intends to support this.

The panel is of the opinion that there is an opportunity for Historic Wales to make an important contribution. We had a strong impression that there was an element of competition and some mistrust between a number of the member institutions and we believe there is room to build on the current collaboration between the bodies. The panel noted the Library's decision to have a stand (and associated costs) for itself at the National Eisteddfod in 2019 and to not be part of The History Area. It plans to continue to do so in 2020. Whilst we understand the Library's motivation to do this at a location so close to home, we believe this policy should be reconsidered to take into account other joint- working arrangements that could satisfy the Library's requirements, whilst also meeting those of other partners.

All of these bodies contribute uniquely to the conservation of the nation's heritage, and we believe that there is an opportunity to integrate somewhat and to manage the assets in their care more imaginatively. Examples of this are considering whether one collections policy should be agreed for members of the Historic Wales body to ensure that opportunities are not missed, and to provide clarity for the bodies and the public. This is also a strategic matter for the Welsh Government as a sponsor, but we encourage the Library and its colleagues from Historic Wales to discuss such a scheme.

On several occasions, comments have been received regarding giving the

Library an extended role at a Wales level along with local libraries and archives. The Library is concerned that this would be an additional strain should the Library be required to look after the interests of local libraries, but the panel is of the opinion that there is scope for the Library to have a role in mentoring regional Libraries and Archives, but not managing them. We believe the Government's role is to establish a strategy for developing libraries and archives in Wales, but with the National Library and local libraries and archives being key in the creation and implementation of the strategy. We encourage the Government to develop the strategy as a matter of urgency.

A survey of all Welsh local authorities was carried out by the Welsh Local Government Association in November 2019, to gauge the response of local archives and libraries to the Library's work. A response was received from 12 local authorities from across Wales including rural and urban authorities, who were asked:

- about their awareness of the Library's contribution
- what types of projects they engage in with the Library
- for examples of engagement activity, and
- suggestions for further engagement with the Library.

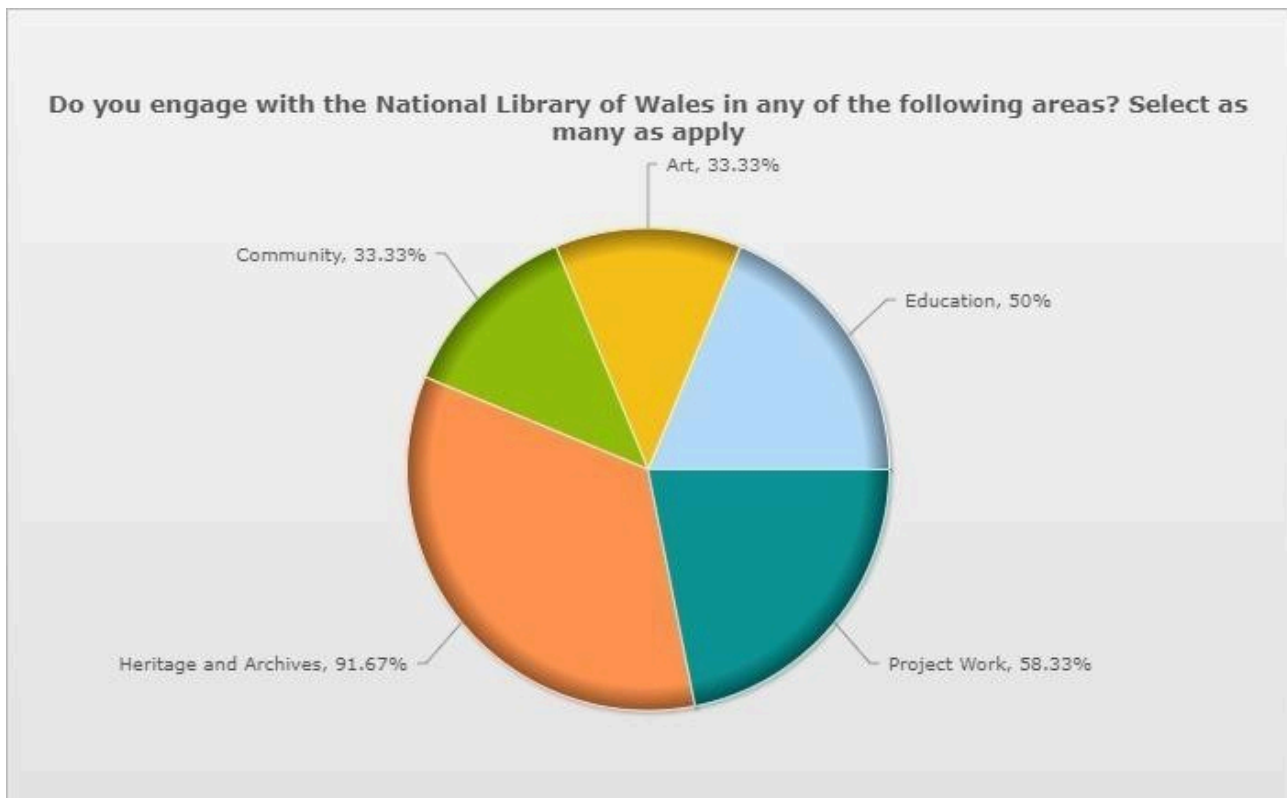
Responses from the 12 local authorities show that they were aware of the Library's work and involved with the Library in a number of areas, including education, arts, community, heritage and archive, and project work. Other areas mentioned related to digital resources including access to electronic resources such as e-books, e-journals, research resources regarding genealogy, exhibitions and cultural events.

The engagement activity described included access to newspaper and magazine articles, local exhibitions in libraries, and the Living Landmarks scheme, which involves people with dementia.

We noted specifically the work the Library has undertaken to support the work of



local councils in digitisation, and examples were given of support for local library staff in digitising tapes, cassettes and CDs. The Library was also praised for its leadership in providing advice to local archives and libraries on the conservation of their collections, and for co-ordinating digital work in the sector.



(Welsh Association of Local Councils survey of Welsh council library departments, 2020, sample: 12)

There was unanimous support for the Library's work. A number of ideas were suggested to build on and develop the relationship going forward:

- strengthening the relationship between local authorities and the Library, and this would be seen as a means of reducing the duplication of work within the sector. The expertise of the Library's professional staff was praised, particularly for their leadership in supporting projects such as the All Wales Management System, and in improving standards across the sector by



creating a national framework.

- spreading awareness of the Library's collections by increasing marketing activity and engagement programmes. The technical and professional expertise of the Library's staff is appreciated, and better access is desired to the Library's expertise, advice and support for local archive and library staff, especially for the skills of digitising and maintaining specialist collections.
- increasing local exhibitions by the Library, developing the relationship with local exhibitions and resources. It was also noted that there was an opportunity for the Library to support the necessary creation of resources for the history and culture of Wales to deliver the new curriculum in Wales from 2022.

We were told by local archive and library representatives that they would welcome a strategy that would enable the Library to share collections, and to develop and share its digital skills in particular. The Library is encouraged by the Government to offer a proactive response to the sector's activity, and to be part of developing a strategy for libraries within the context of the current work on developing cultural priorities. There is no doubt of the key work carried out by the Library and the respect for its professionalism and expertise in specialist areas of conservation and the production of digital material, but we believe that the sector is seeking leadership. We believe it would be helpful for the Welsh Government to bring together the stakeholders to agree on developing a digital collections strategy for archives in Wales, which should include consideration of the contribution of Historic Wales and local archives alike.

The Library has traditionally been seen as a leader in the area of Welsh archives and libraries. It has expertise in digital preservation, in digitising print and archive materials, and in conservation and methods of preserving archives. Its role of mentoring and sharing expertise has waned to some extent within the sector, and a number of local and regional librarians and archivists would like the Library to re-establish its role as a provider of expertise within the sector at a difficult time for libraries and archives within local government. While we understand the Library's concern that it does not wish to take on the

responsibilities of local libraries and archives, we recommend that further consideration be given by the Welsh Government's Culture and Sport division to the National Library's role in relation to local libraries and archives in Wales in particular, and how the Library could develop its collaborative role in the sector.

We believe that the Library has the potential to engage further with Wales' Higher Education Institutions, and international higher education institutions with the aim of being involved in research projects that can make full use of the Library's collections. The National Library of Scotland's agreement with Edinburgh and Glasgow Universities, for example, can be observed to understand the possibilities of working together for the benefit of the partners. We note that the Library currently does not have independent research status (nor does the Library of Scotland), which means that funding bids cannot be led or made independent of other bodies. The valuable contract to digitise newspapers up to 1919 in Wales was won by a making a joint bid with Universities. This project attracted hundreds of thousands to their web pages. We believe that the Library should consider developing a bid to be recognised as an independent research body, and that consideration should also be given to developing projects similar to the digitising of the newspapers of 1914-18 as part of the wider First World War project for Education.

The Library's application to UKRI (the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Funding Council) to develop a reliable digital repository and the wealth of advantages that stem from that is particularly exciting and filled with potential. The intention is to develop a digital repository that would store all the digital data available in Welsh universities and public bodies, and the aim is to train professional archivists and others to use these digital resources within their institutions' work. The application has been submitted jointly with the Ancient Monuments Society and Aberystwyth University and, if successful, the Library will work closely with the University to provide an opportunity to develop intensive research, and training to use the technology within arts, humanities and sciences. The ambition and vision and development of this expertise by the Library are welcome.

We recommend that the Library develops a formal partnership with suitable Further and Higher Education bodies to develop funding applications and joint projects, similar to the application for a database.

## **Economic and sustainability model**

Welsh Government places an emphasis on public bodies to behave in a more commercial way to protect the core services. The ability of a body to do this is dependent on the relevant skills and suitable assets for attracting commercial income. In this respect, the Library is at a disadvantage compared to other bodies in this sector (e.g. CADW and the National Museum of Wales). The location in Aberystwyth is also a factor in considering the ability to be more commercial, partly due to the relatively low density of the local population.

The Library does not believe at this stage that it has the capacity and experience to exploit commercial opportunities. Most of the commercial activities come under the umbrella of the Library's finance department. The panel is of the opinion that the Library does not currently have the potential to significantly increase commercial income, but we suggest that the Library should seek external expertise to advise in developing its commercial opportunities, and to consult with other experienced bodies in this field such as Visit Wales. It should consider other models adopted by cultural tourism destinations, and it should consider whether it should set up a separate company to develop its commercial activity.

The Library is of the opinion that an on-site café and shop is a valuable resource and that it enriches the visitor's experience. Although the panel finds merit in this, it is also necessary to look at value for money from the taxpayer's perspective especially since the total direct costs of these services are increasingly higher than the income generated (over £90,000 in 2018/19). The Library does not think that there is great potential to increase the shop's income, and bought in products generate the majority of current income. The Library is

also trying to attract additional commercial income, e.g. by holding weddings, but so far, this has not generated much income.

The panel believes that the future of the café and shop must be looked at in detail in the context of value for money for the public. Other options for offering such a provision should be considered in the future, including a business assessment of outsourcing the existing service as well as on-line product sales through other agencies or partnerships.

One aspect of the service offered by the Library, which is inconsistent with other library policies, is genealogy work. There was feedback that the service offered by the Library was of a high standard, and commercial users were surprised that the service was still free of charge. The Library should consider what systems have been adopted in other Libraries in relation to charging for the service and consider a structure for cost recovery for work that is not part of the Library's core duties.

Genealogy also provides a means to attract an international audience to the Library's work and to gain the interest of virtual and physical visitors in the Library's treasures, creating commercial opportunities.

It is acknowledged that the Library has not been able to extend its appeal as a visitor destination, and the Library has not made any request for financial support be that capital or revenue from the Visit Wales fund to develop the site as an area for attracting visitors. We were told that such an application would be welcome, and emphasis was placed on the Library's iconic nature and its potential for providing an interesting and enriching experience for visitors in Mid Wales. We do not believe that the current potential has been studied in sufficient detail and we suggest that consideration be given to commissioning a report on the Library's potential as a visitor destination.

We suggest that as part of that study, consideration should be given to the impact of changing the Library's opening hours, so that it is more accessible for

visitors on the weekend.

Historically, the Library has been fortunate in receiving substantial funding in wills and bequests, which surpass that of the Library of Scotland. The Chief Executive has plans to improve fundraising opportunities and to attract even more legacies. However, it is acknowledged that there is no expertise on fundraising amongst Library staff. We believe that the Library needs to appoint a specialist person to assist the work of fundraising for specific projects.

For the past 60 years, the Library has had an association of Friends who have been very supportive of the charity's work and objectives. It was reported that the Friends have not been very active in recent years. The panel is of the opinion that there is a need to increase enthusiasm in a scheme similar to Friends, and that it offers individuals the opportunity to contribute without being geographically close to the Library. It also provides a means of encouraging supporters to fund specific projects and encourages them to leave a financial legacy to the Library.

## **7. External Engagement: the attitude of its audience towards the National Library**

“ The National Library of Wales is Wales’ best kept secret.”

A quote from a leader of a cultural body in an interview for the review. ”

The National Library is considered to be the treasury of Wales’ rich heritage. The Library's collections are highly valued by users and there is high praise for the level of service and the Library’s staff support to researchers. There is unequivocal commitment and enthusiasm from the Library’s staff towards the collections. The Library's staff have invaluable knowledge and expertise on our

nation's memory. As with all other similar institutions across the world, there is the potential to do more to share information regarding the wealth that is held on our behalf.

We believe that the Library continues to face a challenge described in 1957, on the occasion of the Library's fiftieth anniversary, by the Vice President, Sir Ifan ab Owen Edwards:

“ Unless it is aimed to be a breath of life it never will become, as its founders foresaw, a living centre of our nation's culture and in close contact with our people, particularly our young people. And creating the connection, I suppose, will be the most important task of our Library's next half-century. ”

The challenge of extending the Library's services to diverse and younger audiences was recognised in 1957, and the Library's leadership acknowledges that this remains a priority.

An understanding of its audience, and effective communication by the Library is central to the institution's success and appreciation. We congratulate the Library on maintaining its Customer Service Excellence status (monitored independently) along with its Visit Wales Gold Star status (also monitored independently).

We believe that the Library could do more to understand the requirements of its audience. The Library is not currently commissioning consistent research to identify the needs and opinions of customers. Occasionally, the Beaufort Wales Omnibus Survey is used, which is a face-to-face omnibus survey with the Welsh public, as well as the Welsh Government Visitor Survey, but it is not clear that any action is taken as a result of the research. We therefore suggest that the Library commissions consistent research to measure the response of users and others to the Library's services which would serve as the basis for further action.

7.5. In recent years, no focus groups or public consultations have been commissioned to survey opinion on any of the Library's future plans. Research was commissioned on public attitudes toward the National Library, in the report 'Identifying a Target Audience for the National Library of Wales'. The nature of the National Library's users was analysed in terms of their interests, and three categories of users were identified; students (usually from Aberystwyth University), researchers (mainly academic), and visitors to the library (those who visited for the Drwm's programme of events, and those who make use of the Library's resources, including the shop and café and digital users of the Library's resources, of which the latter were the vast majority).

The image of the Library, as described in the report, is mixed. Regular users of the Library's resources consider it to be an enjoyable and welcoming place to work, but those who have not used the Library, perceive it to be stuffy, intimidating and daunting. The report suggests that this negative image is reinforced by the Library's publicity when it focuses on the contents of the Library's collections rather than the building and use of space, including exhibitions. Despite its recommendation for further investigation to monitor and develop a deeper understanding of the public's understanding of the Library's services, no further work has been commissioned.

There was a positive response to many of the Library's exhibitions, but during the Review comments were also made that the Library's public areas should be used to capture the imagination of the next generation in the future by producing exciting and contemporary exhibitions, which could coincide with exciting digital proposals.

The Welsh Government's Corporate Research branch conducted an online survey between 21 August and 11 September 2019, to which 91 people responded.

There was a consensus that the Library is making a key contribution to the life of Wales. 84% of the respondents visited the Library at least once a year, of whom



70% visited the Library more than once a year. 91% of respondents used the digital resources of which 82% do so more than once a year.

Awareness of some of the Library's services was very high, with digitisation the lowest at 51%. Of those stating that they were aware of the services listed in the survey, 57% used the enquiry more than once a year and 54% the reprographic services, with the Education services scoring the lowest at 21%.

Suggestions for improving the service included: reducing the cost for digitisation on demand; that reprographic production be carried out quicker; and that it should be made easier to access copies of the Library's resources, along with digital access across Wales.

Survey questions also focussed on user's awareness and satisfaction of facilities at the Library, with 71% of respondents unaware of the venue hire potential, 44% respondents unaware of the quiet spaces and 42% respondents unaware of the seasonal events at the Library.

It was noted that the Library should broaden its appeal to new audiences through better promotion and marketing. There was a very positive response to the wealth of the Library's collections, but it was noted that there was a lack of materials on, or by, gay communities and various ethnic backgrounds. It was suggested that the Library could increase public awareness of the content of the collections, and that the digitisation of resources should be increased. While respondents were very positive about the value of online materials, comments on the online catalogue emphasised that there are many areas in need of improvement. This included ease of access to information, and greater clarity regarding how to search for materials. It was felt that finding material on the website was difficult, and it was believed that more could be done to communicate to the general public that so many of the Library's resources were available online.

The majority believed that the Library's greatest priorities should be to continue



to preserve the collections for generations to come (62%), and to improve access to the Library through digitised collections (56%).

The professionalism of the Library's staff and their willingness to assist readers was praised (87%), and the level of overall satisfaction with the Library's services was high (86%).

The report's conclusions have driven the Library's activity in communication and marketing since 2018. For example, follow-up work was done on segments and a structure for implementation was presented to the Board in July 2018. On that basis, the Promotion and Marketing Unit has been planning campaigns, in relation to readers in particular, and there has been bespoke activity to target undergraduate students. However, as suggested by the Library, it is believed necessary to consider the appropriateness of what is on offer or the product as well as the way in which communication and marketing is carried out.

The Library's Strategy Plan (2017-21) recognises the importance of engaging with users by extending 'marketing strategies', and with the aim of increasing commercial activity, increasing donations, and seeking grants, with a target of raising £1 million a year by 2021. One of the Library's core aim is to 'give access' to the Library's recorded knowledge, particularly in relation to Wales, 'for the benefit of the public' in line with its Charter objectives. The Plan proposes a target of doubling digital use to 3 million visitors by 2021, and a goal of doubling the number of digital items available to 10 million by 2021. The Government placed a responsibility on the Library to build on the current digitisation programme as a means of improving access to collections, and also as a means of helping and encouraging people to participate and engage.

We suggest that consideration be given to developing an updated external engagement and comprehensive outreach action plan which maximises the use of social media and other means of telling the Library's story. The external engagement plan could ensure that the Library reaches out to all kinds of communities across Wales, proactively engaging with stakeholders and

partners, and developing beneficial partnerships with other bodies, including local libraries and archives, Historic Wales, and a range of art and literature bodies with support from the Arts Council of Wales and Literature Wales.

We were told by stakeholders on several occasions that the Library has a wealth of materials available to share, but they are not being put to best use at present. We were told that the current Executive Team wishes to increase marketing and promotional activity and to develop partnerships, but that there is currently insufficient capacity to do so effectively, and that a combination of additional planning and resources is needed to achieve this. For the 2021-2026 period, we believe that the challenge of improving the Library's engagement with the public should be a clear priority.

We suggest that the Library's digital offer, particularly the website, should be redeveloped, making it easier for people to navigate and use the latest technology to keep visitors on the site and introduce them to new content. We recognise that this will require significant but necessary investment for both the website and the digital infrastructure. The majority of Library users come into contact with the institution through the internet and digital services, and we believe that it is inevitable that the digital field will attract more investment as demand for the Library's more traditional services decreases. This is also a key development for the Library, to deal with the difficulties for people to access collections that are only available in Aberystwyth.

The Library has been at the forefront of developing digital skills and services for archives and libraries in Wales and internationally over the past decade, before the effects of austerity disrupted this work. It is unquestionable that the digital preservation of some of its collections, and its technical expertise is widely recognised. In addition, its work in digitising collections is an important contribution to increasing access to the Library.

We agree that content should continue to be digitised to the highest standards, but material for digitisation should be prioritised, taking into account the greatest

value to users and potential users in the future. It should be clear which materials are to be digitised and why, as well as how they contribute to expanding the Library's appeal. This digital content provides an opportunity to consult and engage with the public. It was encouraging to see the collaboration on digital schemes in libraries across the UK and beyond and this should continue, including developing a shared understanding of the global digitisation register.

We believe that attention should also be given to developing the visitor experience when visiting the Library in person. The Library is one of few institutions in Mid Wales of international significance, and it could attract more tourists and the local public, contributing to securing a prosperous future for the surrounding area as a visiting point, and as a creative boost in partnership with others.

The Library has a range of marketing policies in this area (including the 2017 Marketing Strategy) which have been developed over the years, but the Library's capacity to implement the policies has been reduced by cuts in staffing resources and to the budget over the last period.

It is striking to consider the response of other corresponding libraries, namely the British Library, the National Library of Scotland, and the Aberystwyth University Library, to the challenge of attracting and targeting new audiences for their services.

## **The British Library**

The British Library (BL) is the main library for the United Kingdom, holding over 150 million items. It is a depository library, and a public body funded by the British Government's Department of Culture, Sport and Media. The Library's strategy identifies a number of the key challenges facing every depository library. There is now an expectation that the user experience of engaging with a

library is more sophisticated. The BL believes that their services will be more accepted as part of the 'Internet of Things', using personal phone apps and virtual reality technology.

It is believed that there is a digital divide between younger users, who use social media and who use the media more widely, and older users, who are more traditional in their use of library resources. The number of physical visitors to the BL is decreasing, but the number of digital visitors is increasing.

The Library's users expect a wide range of materials to be available to them, and they are keen to experience more recreational learning options, in the form of computer and simulated games. It is also believed that progress in lifelong learning is an opportunity to tailor services to their use. The BL has also identified the different needs of Universities, and the emphasis on them to secure funding and to demonstrate an effective impact. It is keen to develop partnerships with higher education bodies in order to create new markets for content. And with regard to University research, it is considering developing a role as a repository and gatherer of data and information collected by researchers. The BL has also developed business expertise, and has created the 'Knowledge Quarter' partnership, which offers support to businesses with entrepreneur support, training and advice resources for new businesses. The project has now been rolled out to 20 centres, located in local libraries.

## **The National Library of Scotland**

External engagement with the public has been a cornerstone of the National Library of Scotland's (NLS) strategy since the publication of "Breaking through the Walls", its corporate strategy in 2004, followed by "Expanding our Horizons", its strategy document for the 2008- 2011 period. The NLS has commissioned a company to report regularly on audience development, exhibition content, marketing and communication, website review, and the development of other services.

The NLS has identified the behaviour and expectations of Library users and distinguishes between 'millennials' (reaching 18 by 2000), and the 'digital born generation' (born after 2001). These users are more likely to use digital media without a desire to visit in person. These are more likely to research online, and to want personal resources such as sheet notes and targeted information web bulletins. It is believed that users are more likely to adapt the NLS's collections and resources for their own purposes. These users are also more likely to use and share materials in a multi-media way, and to use them for personal and social purposes. But for others, often from the older generation, they prefer print format, and continue to behave as traditional users.

The NLS has identified its increased service to schools as a key development in future, and the Library connecting with other bodies in partnership, such as educational bodies.

One of the NLS's most successful projects is the creation of the digital platform for maps of Scotland in conjunction with the NLW to include maps of Wales as part of the project. The Library is receiving income from copies of the maps, and it is likely that there is considerable demand for copies due to the interest in land and property boundaries. The NLW has yet to exploit this commercial possibility.

We also believe it is worth the NLW deepening its relationship with the National Library of Scotland, particularly in considering its recent work on outreach and serving various audiences, which has included inviting prominent Scots to curate presentations on materials from the Library archive which are personally important to them, and it is an idea that could be considered for replication in Wales.

## **Aberystwyth University Library**

The development of Aberystwyth University Library (AUL) reflects the developments in the way undergraduate students use library resources. The

library is located within three hundred yards of the National Library, and the changes made there reflect some of the criticisms made by students regarding the NLW. The basis for the reorganisation of the library is that a visit to this library is seen as a social experience. The library space has been made more accessible, with communal study areas, excellent Wi-Fi connection, and freedom to eat, drink and talk. 'Quiet' areas are also available for students who wish to study in a more traditional way. The library has rebranded itself as a place to socialise as well as a place to research in the traditional way of libraries. The opening hours have been extended so that it is possible for students to use the resources 24 hours a day, although opening hours vary according to the college term dates. The emphasis is on group study, offering digital resources for downloading digital content online for work and leisure.

Several times when this Review was undertaken, the issue of the NLW's location in Aberystwyth was raised, noting it as both an advantage and a disadvantage. In this day and age, this question should be more irrelevant than ever, as digital means of sharing information become easier and more familiar. It is entirely appropriate that the Aberystwyth and Ceredigion areas are focal points as part of the NLW's external engagement scheme (and it is fair to note that it is mainly schools from the surrounding areas that visit the National Library of Scotland), but we believe that this should be supported by an awareness and confidence that the Library considers itself to be a truly national body. Given that the Library's presence outside Aberystwyth is very limited, and that there is no likelihood that the Library will be able to develop significant centres in the more densely populated areas of Wales, it is essential that the Library finds other ways of reaching its audience across Wales. The aim of reaching the rest of the people of Wales is at the heart of the Library's mission, and an imaginative strategy is needed to meet the challenge of making the Library's resources available across Wales and beyond – in collaboration with others, digitally, and through other Welsh archives and libraries, as well as schools and universities.

One example of the potential of using digital technology to reach a new audience is the presence of a small room in the Cardiff University Library, which

is earmarked as a National Library reading room. The two terminals there enable readers to access the Library's digital deposit materials, which is only possible because the resources are located in a room that has been earmarked as a National Library room. Although access and usage is limited, this model could conceivably be replicated in other libraries and archives throughout Wales, including the new 'clip' centres, ensuring access to the electronic content of the Library's collections across the country. We understand that the Library is considering developing this model of access points, which we welcome. We recommend that the Library considers extending this model in collaboration with education libraries and the main local libraries in Wales.

Consideration could be given to expanding the outreach schemes that are in place to introduce 'clip centres' around Wales as a result of the BBC Archive project to include access to wider materials from the Library. Since December 2018, the National Library has been holding exhibitions of some of its collections in a gallery at Glan-yr-afon Library, Haverfordwest, as part of a partnership between the Library and Pembrokeshire County Council. It runs a six-month thematic exhibitions programme, and a permanent exhibition on Pembrokeshire's history, culture and tales. The National Library has also delivered a programme of events and a series of educational workshops to coincide with each exhibition. The first two thematic exhibitions at Glan-yr-afon were popular, with 4,628 visitors to the Kyffin Williams exhibition (April – June 2019) and 5,280 visitors (July – September 2019) to the Library's Treasures exhibition. This partnership should be used as a model for exhibitions elsewhere in Wales.

The Library is developing Oriel Gregynog as a space with the appropriate Government Indemnity Scheme and environmental control standards, to display paintings, but it would be desirable to develop exhibitions across Wales, using other appropriate gallery facilities. There are good examples of engagement which should be considered for replication at the National Library of Scotland (which organised a touring exhibition that has already visited 60 centres across the country over a three-year period), and the British Library (which has



developed joint projects with local libraries in 20 locations in England) under the Living Knowledge Network scheme, where it co-operates to hold celebrations of authors such as Jane Austen and Malorie Blackman to showcase materials from the British Library locally.

During the review period, the Library was found to be involved in several extremely interesting and valuable projects and schemes, but that these had not been communicated externally effectively.

For example, in BBC Radio Cymru's Unnos Gwerin Project, six musicians were given the challenge of composing new folk arrangements in less than 12 hours. It was a joint project between the Welsh Folk-Song Society, the National Library of Wales and Radio Cymru. Presenter Lisa Gwilym and harpist Gwenan Gibbard, visited the Library over the summer, and having had the opportunity to see the Merêd (Meredydd Evans) and Phyllis Kinney archive, the challenge set before them was to create and play music together, based on the musical archives. The musicians had a special experience discovering new music in the archive and staying overnight in the building to collaborate on the songs with other musicians.

It was noted that the Library was relying heavily on its presence at the National Eisteddfod to engage with stakeholders and the public. We believe that the Library should also consider developing relationships with other partners, for example, the Royal Welsh Show, Literature Wales, the Hay Festival and other events, to consider the potential of celebrating the Library's work on a national scale.

The NLW provides a programme of successful events at its site in Aberystwyth. While acknowledging the additional costs involved in taking elements of this programme on tour, we believe that there should be an attempt to extend this programme across Wales, planning an entertaining programme in both English and Welsh that would appeal to various audiences, and in collaboration with local archives and libraries.



A number of ideas were presented during the review, including taking films which are cared for by the Library on tour, arranging a series of touring exhibitions, ensuring that more people can see the collections (including art collections), and increasing the Library's profile in general by delivering a co-ordinated outreach scheme: It's special taking cultural stuff, which are local, out into areas. To be relevant to everyone in Wales - the walls need to be knocked down in Aberystwyth. We accept that this is already happening to some extent, but many interviewees felt that there was a widespread desire to see the Library's treasures displayed in the community.

The Library only has two education officers at the moment. The Government is asking the Library to develop and deliver formal learning programmes in line with the new Curriculum for Wales, continue to create learning resources for Hwb, and attract funding for research and partnership working with the institutions in the higher education sector. This great expectation on the team is unrealistic given its level of resources. Consideration should be given to making working with schools within the Library and bidding for additional resources from the Government to meet such wide-ranging requirements a greater priority. It would be possible to place greater emphasis on engaging with children and young people.

We believe that a larger Education Team could offer the Library a special means of getting to know the needs and opinions of its future customers. The Library should give priority to providing all children in Wales the opportunity to have a connection to the heritage that is available to them – whether it be:

- by visiting the Library, or a touring exhibition to a nearby centre;
- by going into schools;
- by working in partnership with other institutions that come into contact with a large number of children;
- or through digital engagement with learning materials or objects, including continuing to contribute to Hwb.

The Library has a unique story to tell regarding the importance of its collections and its notable contribution to Welsh culture. It is important that it can pass on its message about its work and its impact to an influential audience, including Assembly Members and Government Ministers. We believe that the Library, in collaboration with the Government's sponsorship team, has an opportunity to create opportunities for senior Welsh Government officials, Ministers and Assembly Members to attend awareness sessions of the Library's work. We were told several times during our investigation of the Library's economic importance. We note that in the last decade, no review has been undertaken into the Library's economic significance. We strongly suggest that such a study be undertaken to assess the Library's current economic contribution and its potential for the future.

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