

What do you think should be the Committee's key priorities for the next few years?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to no more than 500 words).

The Museums Association (MA) is a membership organisation representing and supporting museums and people who work with them throughout the UK. Our network includes 11,000 individual members working in all types of roles, from directors to trainees, and we represent 1,500 institutional members ranging from small volunteer run local museums to large national institutions. Founded in 1889, the MA was the world's first professional body for museums. We lead thinking in UK museums with initiatives such as Museums Change Lives and Anti-racist Museums, and we provide £1.4m per year of funding for museum projects via our Esmée Fairbairn Communities and Collections Fund and other grants. For more information about the MA, see our website:

<http://www.museumsassociation.org/home>

Our vision is for inclusive, participatory and sustainable museums at the heart of their communities. We would like to see the Committee's priorities support this vision.

We suggest this can be achieved in a number of ways:

Strategic public investment in national and local museums so they can look after collections and buildings, support learning, community engagement and health and wellbeing programmes. Lack of capacity and the cost of living are challenges for institutions and communities. Funding for culture should be increased to a per capita level that is comparable with other similar European nations. The £5.28m package announced in July for museums, galleries and archives is very welcome and will help museums to safeguard collections, improve facilities and provide opportunities for communities to participate in culture. However, sustained public investment is required to create a resilient sector and **multi-year funding** would give museums the ability to plan ahead. Museums would benefit from dedicated funding to ensure their buildings and collections are sustainable and that they can continue to support communities to take action on climate justice. This would support the Welsh Government priority to progress towards net zero by 2040.

Prioritising **diversity, equity and inclusion** in museums for communities and the workforce. We would like to see a commitment to continued funding for museums to support the delivery of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan. With commitments to EDI being rolled back globally, this work needs to be prioritised more than ever.

Creating a commitment for **primary school pupils to visit a museum at least once per year**. Alongside programming costs, the cost of transport is a barrier to schools visiting museums. We would like solutions to this problem explored through cross governmental working and conversations with schools and museums.

Investing in digital through providing dedicated funding to support museums to grow their digital capacity and engagement would widen access to museums and support them to remain relevant and innovative.

Embedding culture and heritage across government policy including health, education, community cohesion, health and wellbeing, economic development and climate. The Committee should encourage cross-departmental working and ensure culture and heritage is a central consideration across policy areas. Culture and heritage have transformational power in society and can support a wide variety of policy outcomes to be achieved.

The Welsh Government's key national objectives include improving health through prevention, delivering sustainable economic growth and quality jobs, and strengthening Wales's national identity, including its language and culture.

Where do you think the Committee should focus its scrutiny to be most effective in holding the Welsh Government to account for progress and delivery against these objectives?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to no more than 500 words).

Museums in Wales play a vital role in driving tourism and the visitor economy, improving health and wellbeing and community cohesion and supporting the use of the Welsh language in daily life. Museums also provide opportunities for people to engage with Welsh culture and history. The Committee should examine how public investment supports museums to develop and interpret collections that represent the culture of Wales's diverse communities and its linguistic heritage.

There is further potential to be unlocked in the role of museums using collections to deliver preventative health and wellbeing initiatives and social prescribing. While many museums deliver such initiatives, there is not a joined-up strategy and funding and capacity to deliver this work is a challenge. The Museums Association's Health and Wellbeing in Museums Fund, funded by the Julia Rausing Trust provides a programme of grant-making, networking and learning dissemination for health and wellbeing programmes in museums. The fund is for museums with a proven track record of delivering successful health and wellbeing initiatives and the grants enable the development and continuation of these programmes during a time of financial crisis and increasing demand for services. We believe scrutiny should be focused around ensuring the role of museums and the wider culture sector in improving health through prevention is recognised, valued and most importantly funded.

Plaid Cymru's manifesto committed to examining options for making cultural provision a statutory requirement for public bodies, including local authorities, health boards and national parks, through a new Culture Act, ensuring that culture is embedded at the heart of public life in Wales. We believe that the Committee should focus its scrutiny on the development of this Culture Act and in ensuring that cultural is recognised, embedded and funded.

The Committee should look into how the government supports the museum workforce including through skills development, staffing, career pathways and fair pay. It would be important for the Committee to consider the impact of AI on the museum workforce in Wales.

Do you have any specific suggestions for committee work within the areas of culture, communications, Cymraeg and sport?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to no more than 500 words).

We would like the committee to look at the six areas of focus in the draft Culture Strategy for Wales:

1. A Healthier Wales: Culture and sport improve the health and wellbeing of people
2. A Wealthier Wales: Culture and sport unlock more of our economic potential
3. A Resilient Wales: Our cultural and sporting infrastructure is sustainable and cared for with a strong workforce in place
4. Skilled Wales: Raising education standards and increasing skills through embedding access to culture and sport for children and young people
5. A More Connected Wales: Culture and sport bring people together, connecting our communities through a sense of place
6. A bi-lingual and confident Wales: Culture and sport are celebrated on a world stage

The Committee should scrutinise the potential long-term and multi-year models for museums as it would allow them to plan ahead, develop projects with meaningful community impact and retain staff with the right skills. The Committee should examine if funding criteria supports long-term organisational resilience as well as visible outputs. Short-term grants create instability, limit ambition and often results in the valuable relationships that have been built between museums and communities being lost when the short-term contract of the person delivering the project comes to an end.

We would also like the Culture Committee to consider:

- The financial sustainability of museums in Wales and the potential of introducing multi-year funding to give museums the ability to plan ahead.
- How the Welsh government could work with other nations in the UK to support consistent data gathering for the museum sector.
- The role of museums in delivering the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan.

Anything else?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to no more than 500 words).

The Committee should consider how the government could invest in shared storage solutions for museums. Many collections are still held in unsuitable stores. Efficient storage solutions in which multiple museums share the same up-to-date storage facility, or where specific collection types are held centrally could provide enhanced resilience and environmental benefits while also ensuring that collections are well documented and digitised. Cyngor Gwynedd and Bangor University are already developing shared collections storage in Northwest Wales. However, further investment in shared storage across Wales would ensure that multiple collections are cared for in the best conditions possible and safeguarded for future generations. There would also be potential to make these facilities regional resource centres that act as hubs for research, learning and community engagement which would enhance public benefit and access to collections.

We would encourage the Committee to consider the benefits of introducing statutory protection for museum services in Wales. Being non-statutory services often means museums are the first services to be cut from public spending despite their significant contribution to education, health and wellbeing, community cohesion, cultural participation and the promotion of Cymraeg. Museums are worth investing in as part of Wales's national infrastructure and preventative spend in museums can ease pressure on public services.

For example, Torfaen Museum and Inside Out Cymru worked with Building Resilient Communities Torfaen to deliver 'Create: Community Champions'. The 48 week participatory arts programme supported adults facing barriers to positive wellbeing such as social isolation, unsupported neurodivergence, and physical health conditions through printmaking, ceramics and craft workshops in the museum. Participants developed skills in creative problem solving, decision making and resilience, while meeting like-minded people and learning more about their community. This is just one example of the many projects delivered by museums across Wales that provide non-emergency health and wellbeing services to communities.

Introducing a statutory duty for museum provision or a statutory minimum standard for access to museum and heritage services would help secure long-term investment, reduce regional inequalities and ensure that future generations have access to a high-quality museum service near to where they live.
