



MA response to Finance Committee Consultation: Welsh Government Draft Budget 2027-28

1. What are the main financial pressures you, your family or your organisation are facing between now and the end of this Senedd term in 2030?

Please outline your reasons for your answer to question 1

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

The Museums Association (MA) is a membership organisation that represents and supports museums and the people who work with them across the four nations. Our network includes 11,000 individual members in all types of roles, from directors to trainees, and we represent 1,500 institutional members, from small volunteer-run local museums to large national institutions.

The main financial pressure facing museums in Wales is rising operational costs and day to day revenue spending to keep the doors open. A key issue is funding for necessary building repairs and maintenance. Many museums are in historic or listed buildings that require regular maintenance to minimise deterioration and avoid larger, more expensive repair work later. Issues like roof leaks, damp basements, and faulty HVAC systems can seriously damage collections. Uneven floors and electrical issues can be health and safety hazards for staff and visitors. Long-term funding cuts have often delayed routine maintenance, leading to urgent repairs that require closures. For example, National Museum Cardiff has a maintenance backlog costing approximately £42.6 million, including £13 million for urgent repairs, with a period of site closure being considered.

Years of budget cuts, wage inflation and the increase in employer National Insurance contributions have pushed many museums to implement compulsory redundancies, voluntary severances, and organisational restructuring. This can lead to the loss of expert skills and knowledge, and reduce key collection work like cataloguing, digitisation, and

conservation, impacting future exhibitions, services, and community engagement. This can also increase the workload and pressure on remaining staff, impacting their health and wellbeing.

According to the MA's Members Survey 2025/26, 58% of respondents said their museum, or the museum they work with, was planning cuts in services in 2025/26. 41% said cuts would result in job losses.

Other operational costs that have contributed to the financial pressures facing museums include:

- The rise in energy bills, which has had a significant impact on museums that require 24-hour climate control to protect their collections
- The management of overcrowded stores
- Rising costs of supplies and construction for displays and exhibitions.

2. How should the Welsh Government prioritise funding based on its stated priorities, and what areas of current spending could be de-prioritised?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

Museums are essential civic institutions that already contribute to the delivery of some of the stated priorities. Funding decisions should take them into account so the sector can grow and help the country meet its targets.

Cutting waiting lists and building a health and care service fit for the future – Museums support and improve health and wellbeing by facilitating social connection, mindfulness, low-impact movement, and learning opportunities. Through guided tours, workshops, group activities, and interactive exhibitions, visitors can meet like-minded people, share experiences, and develop a sense of belonging. Museums also deliver tailored programmes for visitors with additional needs, including workshops for people with dementia and their carers, and sensory-friendly exhibition tours and activities. By delivering social prescribing services, museums relieve some pressure on healthcare services.

We would like the government to fulfil its manifesto commitment to increase the budget for culture, heritage, arts and sport year on year over the next Senedd term, recognising the

essential role of culture and sport in supporting good health and wellbeing across demographics and in line with the shift towards preventative initiatives.

Unleashing the potential of the Welsh economy and creating good, well-paid jobs –

Museums are key cultural attractions that boost the visitor economy. They also offer training and volunteering opportunities to develop the workforce skills needed. With sustainable funding, museums can implement the living wage across departments, including front-of-house and outsourced contractors.

Raising standards in our schools and ensuring the best conditions for learning –

Museums in Wales deliver engaging school visits aligned with the curriculum, offering object-centred learning that can improve engagement and information retention, guided tours, and tailored workshops to bring the curriculum to life. Introducing students to museum spaces builds confidence and develops cultural capital. To raise educational standards and improve learning conditions, primary school pupils need support to visit a museum at least once a year, with funding for public transport and programme costs to overcome geographical and transport barriers.

Tackling child poverty - Children growing up in poverty are less likely to access arts education and risk missing out on the important personal and social benefits it provides. However, museums can drive social change and inclusion by improving access through free and low-income concession tickets and by collaborating with community organisations to enhance community engagement. The Museums Association is involved in a research project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and led by the Research Centre for Museums & Galleries at the University of Leicester, which seeks to enable Museums and Heritage Institutions to deepen their contribution to society by understanding how they can close the gap between who visits and who benefits from museums, galleries and heritage.

3. Given the limits on the amount of funding available, do you have any views about how the budget could be allocated more efficiently?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

The limited funding requires efficient allocation to maximise impact. For the museum sector, this means reducing reliance on emergency/reactive grants and allocating funding to preventative investments and strategic change.

This can be achieved through multi-year settlements, which would allow museums to plan essential repairs and routine maintenance before they become expensive emergencies. Ring-fencing a percentage of capital funding for routine maintenance would reduce the need for emergency repair funding and, in the long term, the total cost to the public purse.

It should also leverage existing operational and advisory bodies like Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales, Museums Federation Wales, and the Museums Association to support smaller regional museums and encourage collaboration. Museums as civic institutions should be utilised to deliver on government policy across education, community cohesion, health and wellbeing, climate and economic development as well as the Government's stated priorities.

4. Do you have any views on how the Welsh Government should use its current tax raising powers?

<https://research.senedd.wales/financial-scrutiny/what-are-welsh-devolved-taxes/>

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

5. Do you think the Welsh Government can link funding for policies to outputs and outcomes and, if so, how?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

The Welsh Government can link policy funding to outputs and outcomes, as it can encourage collaboration across departments and organisations, increase transparency, and monitor long-term progress. However, it may be difficult to quantify certain outcomes; some policies might take years to have a tangible impact, add administrative burden to already strained resources, and narrow the focus to targets rather than embedding strategic change.

For museums, outputs and outcomes can be measured using data the sector already collects for funding bodies or as a national requirement:

- Access and engagement – visitor numbers, including demographic data. Demographic data on who is engaging with public programming. Data can be pulled from the National Survey for Wales.

- Education – school visit numbers and engagement with programming linked to the curriculum
- Workforce – employment, apprenticeship and training in the sector data

Museums can also monitor their progress and impact through self-assessment, which helps identify strengths and areas for improvement and informs future planning. The MA has created toolkits such as Power to the People, a self-assessment framework for participatory practice that sets out community engagement principles, and a framework that supports museums in understanding and developing their community engagement. Additionally, we developed the Measuring Socially Engaged Practice toolkit, which outlines methods for conducting evaluations and assessment cycles.

6. What actions would you like to see in the Welsh Government budget to support economic growth in Wales?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

Museums in Wales play a vital role in driving tourism and the visitor economy.

Multi-year capital and revenue funding for museums to plan for long-term, sustainable operations, including necessary maintenance and repair work. It would also help museums secure match funding. This would support economic growth in Wales by:

Boosting tourism – Capital funding enables museums to invest in infrastructure upgrades that modernise their facilities and make them more accessible. It also enables them to develop more ambitious and interactive exhibitions. Revenue funding can help museums market their offerings more effectively, extend opening hours, and create engaging public programming, all of which make them anchor tourist destinations.

Creating jobs and training opportunities – Redevelopment projects create construction and skilled trade jobs, and with financial stability, museums can retain permanent roles across conservation, curation, education, operations and hospitality. With the right funding and support, museums can offer internships, apprenticeships, and training programmes that help build a skilled workforce.

Funding to improve public transport links and service frequency outside South East Wales can increase access to rural and regional museums and boost tourism across the country.

7. What is the single biggest issue in the budget that would make a difference to you, your family or your organisation?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

The biggest issue in the budget for museums across Wales is persistent underfunding and real-term revenue cuts. While the Welsh Government has provided several funding grants to the sector over the last few years, the impact is limited by a large and growing capital deficit, high inflation, and rising operational costs. Underfunding and budget cuts have led to staff redundancies, a backlog of infrastructure repair and maintenance, reduced operating hours, extended unplanned closures, reduced community engagement initiatives, and museums being unable to maintain sector standards of care for their collections.

Polling by Art Fund found that 74% of Welsh people want to maintain or increase funding for Welsh museums and galleries. <https://www.artfund.org/professional/news-and-insights/museums-and-galleries-strong-sources-of-national-identity-in-scotland-and-wales>

The sector needs multi-year core funding, in line with inflation, sufficient for museums to begin reducing the maintenance backlog and confidently plan for the future.

8. Should budget allocations change to invest more in preventative initiatives that reduce future demand for services? If so, how can this be achieved?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

Yes, because investment in prevention would reduce future spending. Investment in preventative initiatives should add to, not replace, the existing budget for core needs.

For museums, routine building and collections maintenance (often deprioritised due to funding cuts) costs far less than emergency repairs and conservation work. It would also reduce the risk of unplanned closures that affect visitor income, tourism and community engagement.

Museums can increase our sense of wellbeing, help us feel proud of where we come from, promote social cohesion, and inspire, challenge, and stimulate us, so investment in museums can alleviate pressure on public services.

Museums play a role in the public's health and wellbeing. An Art Fund study (<https://www.artfund.org/our-purpose/news/first-of-its-kind-study-proves-positive-impact-of-art-on-the-body>) found that regular museum visits can reduce loneliness and stress, while participating in museum programming and activities can support cognitive function and social connection. Museums regularly produce projects and programmes that directly support health and wellbeing, such as Bailey Hill's Men's Shed in Mold, Flintshire, an initiative that brings together like-minded men to share skills, experiences, worries, concerns, and to have fun. Across Monmouthshire, MonLife Heritage offers a 12-week programme for people living with dementia and their carers, including gentle exercise, object handling and creative activities. Participants have said the programme has helped rebuild confidence, introduced them to new people, and is something they look forward to.

Museums and culture have transformational power in society and can support a wide variety of policy outcomes to be achieved. Cross-departmental working should ensure culture is a central consideration across policy areas.

To invest more in preventative initiatives:

- A percentage of capital funding should be ring-fenced for routine building and collections maintenance.
- Museum programmes that deliver on education, health and social care outcomes should be co-funded and included in those departmental budgets.

Anything else?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

The MA administers the Esmée Fairbairn Communities and Collections Fund, which supports projects by museums and community organisations that use museum collections to strengthen communities, and the Health and Wellbeing in Museums Fund, which enables the development and continuation of health and wellbeing programmes in museums. The Communities and Collection Fund has awarded grants to museums in Wales, like Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales and the Dylan Thomas Centre, and the MA is actively working to extend the reach of the Health and Wellbeing Fund into Wales. Grants like these add value to public funding for museum collections and building care by supporting programming that produces outcomes aligned with the Welsh Government's stated priorities.

The MA also offers professional development programmes and training for people at every stage of their career in the sector, whether they are just starting out or have years of experience. The programmes and training stay up to date with sector standards and add to the workforce skills and development needed for the sector to thrive and continue contributing to economic growth.