

Consultation on the draft Priorities for Culture in Wales 2024 to 2030

Icon Response, September 2024

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Summary of priorities

Priority 1: Culture brings us together

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

Priority 2: A nation of culture

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

Priority 3: Culture is resilient and sustainable

- A14: Our collections and historic assets are cared for, and used to support learning, creativity, place-making and cultural well-being.
- A15: Organisations responsible for the protection and care of our cultural collections and historic assets have strategic approaches to recognising significance and collecting.
- A16: Our intangible cultural heritage is an intrinsic part of our national story; it is recorded, supported to thrive, and shared with others for the benefit of future generations.
- A17: Culture is supported and enhanced by good digital practice.

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

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

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

Consultation questions

Priority 1: Culture brings us together

Q1. To what extent do you agree this priority should feature in our priorities for culture in Wales?

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Ambition 1: Culture is inclusive, accessible and diverse

Q2. Should we include this ambition as part of our Priorities?

Yes

Ambition 2: Cultural democracy and cultural rights are central to culture in Wales

Q3. Should we include this ambition as part of our Priorities?

Yes

Ambition 3: Culture takes an inclusive and balanced approach to interpreting, commemorating and presenting our past

Q4. Should we include this ambition as part of our Priorities?

Yes

Ambition 4: Culture is integral to place-making and community well-being

Q5. Should we include this ambition as part of our Priorities?

Yes

Ambition 5: Culture reflects the needs and aspirations of children and young people, and inspires the next generation of cultural participants and leaders

Q6. Should we include this ambition as part of our Priorities?

Yes

Ambition 6: Culture strengthens the connection between generations

Q7. Should we include this ambition as part of our Priorities?

Yes

Q8. Are there any ambitions missing which could further support this priority?

No additional comments

Q9. Please use this box to add any further comments you may have regarding Priority 1: Culture brings us together. If you have answered “no” to any question in this section, please explain why here.

No additional comments

Priority 2: A Nation of Culture

Q10. To what extent do you agree this priority should feature in our priorities for culture in Wales?

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Ambition 7: Culture supports and promotes the Welsh language and reflects Wales as a bilingual and multilingual nation

Q11. Should we include this ambition as part of our Priorities?

Yes

Ambition 8: Cultural well-being is deeply embedded into policy making across Wales

Q12. Should we include this ambition as part of our Priorities?

Yes

Ambition 9: Cultural engagement supports individual and community well-being

Q13. Should we include this ambition as part of our Priorities?

Yes

Ambition 10: Culture and heritage bodies will work more collaboratively to maximise the full potential of both their specialist teams and their collections, and will work with other sectors to explore and leverage the power of culture

Q14. Should we include this ambition as part of our Priorities?

Yes

Ambition 11: Culture supports tourism; tourism supports culture. Culture has a high profile in how our nation is marketed to visitors

Q15. Should we include this ambition as part of our Priorities?

Yes

Ambition 12: Culture is integrated into how Wales establishes and develops international relationships

Q16. Should we include this ambition as part of our Priorities?

Yes

Ambition 13: The profile of culture in Wales is raised, by celebrating and promoting culture at a local, national and international level

Q17. Should we include this ambition as part of our Priorities?

Yes

Q18. Are there any ambitions missing which could further support this priority?

No additional comments

Q19. Please use this box to add any further comments you may have regarding Priority 2: A Nation of Culture, If you have answered “no” to any question in this section, please explain why here.

The significant link between heritage and well-being should be capitalised on, particularly the opportunities to use conservation and craft for engaging marginalised communities and those who are traditionally excluded from the broader heritage sector.

Collaborative working between culture and heritage bodies should be championed and the benefits of skills sharing and nurturing sector-leading professional development celebrated. However, a collaborative approach must not provide a route to reducing head count purely to save costs and lead to the loss of specialist professionals, and specialisms, from the Welsh cultural sector.

Priority 3: Culture is resilient and responsible

Q20. To what extent do you agree this priority should feature in our priorities for culture in Wales?

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Ambition 14: Our collections and historic assets are cared for, and used to support learning, creativity, place-making and cultural well-being

Q21. Should we include this ambition as part of our Priorities?

Yes

Ambition 15: Organisations responsible for the protection and care of our cultural collections and historic assets have strategic approaches to recognising significance and collecting

Q22. Should we include this ambition as part of our Priorities?

Yes

Ambition 16: Our intangible cultural heritage is an intrinsic part of our national story; it is recorded, supported to thrive, and shared with others for the benefit of future generations

Q23. Should we include this ambition as part of our Priorities?

Yes

Ambition 17: Culture is supported and enhanced by good digital practice

Q24. Should we include this ambition as part of our Priorities?

Yes

Ambition 18: Culture has a collaborative and long-term approach to research and gathering evidence

Q25. Should we include this ambition as part of our Priorities?

Yes

Ambition 19: The culture sector in Wales is a great place to work and volunteer, with a professional and skilled workforce

Q26. Should we include this ambition as part of our Priorities?

Yes

Ambition 20: The culture sector demonstrates leadership and collaboration in its approaches to sustainable development, building resilience, and tackling all aspects of the climate and nature emergencies

Q27. Should we include this ambition as part of our Priorities?

Yes

Q28. Are there any ambitions missing which could further support this priority?

Ambition 19 is very broad, and should be separated into two, as the actions to support volunteers are different to the needs of the professional workforce.

We would suggest that an additional ambition should read:

The culture sector in Wales is supported by a highly skilled professional workforce with the underpinning knowledge and technical skills to protect and preserve the nation's collections.

Q29. Please use this box to add any further comments you have regarding Priority 3: Culture is resilient and sustainable. If you have answered "no" to any question in this section, please explain why here.

Resilience is a key challenge for the conservation sector.

The conservation profession is highly skilled but relies on a relatively small workforce that is essential to ensuring collections can be protected and preserved for future generations. Conservation also provides vital support that underpins the ability to deliver touring and lending from large organisations such as Amgueddfa Cymru to the smaller cultural organisations across Wales – essential in enabling communities to engage with their shared cultural heritage.

However, many vitally important areas of conservation practice exist on a knife edge. Icon's membership represents more than 150 different material specialisms and areas of conservation practice, often carried out by just a handful of individuals. The issue presents a particularly acute challenge in Wales, where there are just 125 Icon members who work across 24 areas of conservation practice. 16 of which are practiced by less than 5 individuals. Any small, losses in the number of practitioners will have a significant impact on the ability to care for collections in Wales.

These issues are compounded in Wales as the reduction in funded, and economically viable, conservation posts, along with the budget to contract services from private practice on a regular basis, leads to the loss of specialist conservation skills and expertise from Wales and has a knock-on impact across the wider UK. The Government must recognise this risk and ensure that work is done to turn the tide and support the development of the conservation profession more broadly.

Further complicating matters, there is a need to provide more effective support to the education sector to ensure a sustainable pipeline of trained conservators coming into the profession. There is currently only one programme in operation in Wales, however the high space and resource requirements will inevitably place such courses at risk when competing with programmes that are more profitable in the short-term.

Questions relating to the Welsh Language

Q30. What, in your opinion, would be the likely effects of the proposed Priorities for Culture on the Welsh language? We are particularly interested in any likely effects on opportunities to use the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English.

Do you think that there are opportunities to promote any positive effects?

Do you think that there are opportunities to mitigate any adverse effects?

No additional response.

Q31. In your opinion, could the Priorities for Culture be formulated or changed so as to:

have positive effects or more positive effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English; or
mitigate any negative effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English?

No additional response.

Q32. We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

We commend the overall priorities outlined in the 'Priorities for Culture in Wales, 2024 to 2030' and believe they set a strong foundation for the cultural sector. However, we would like to highlight two critical areas that require further attention:

1) Fragility of the Conservation Profession:

The document could more explicitly acknowledge the fragility of the conservation profession in Wales. The current state of this profession poses a significant risk to our collective ability to protect and preserve collections. Without adequate support and resources for conservation professionals, the long-term sustainability and safeguarding of

our cultural heritage are at risk. We strongly recommend that this issue be addressed within the priorities, ensuring that the necessary steps are taken to bolster this essential part of the sector.

2) Dependence on Amgueddfa Cymru:

The priorities should also recognize the reliance on Amgueddfa Cymru for supporting smaller museums, galleries, and cultural organizations across Wales. Amgueddfa Cymru plays a crucial role in providing expertise, resources, and guidance to these institutions. Acknowledging and reinforcing this support network within the strategic priorities would ensure that smaller organisations continue to benefit from the invaluable assistance provided by Amgueddfa Cymru.

We believe that addressing these points will strengthen the strategic framework and better position Wales to preserve its rich cultural heritage for future generations.