

Third Sector Ministerial Meeting with the Minister for the Economy and Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip

Note of meeting on 26th May 2022

List of Attendees

Name	Organisation
San Leonard (SL)	Social Firms Wales
Lloyd Williams (LW)	EYST
Ben Lloyd (BL)	WCVA
Matthew Brown (MB)	WCVA
Derek Walker (DW)	Cwmpas
Gareth Coles (GC)	Creative Lives
Gurmit Singh Randhawa (GR)	Interfaith Council for Wales
Sue Husband (SH)	Business in the Community
Lisa Wills (LW)	Arts Factory
Matthew Williams (MW)	Welsh Sports Association
Tabea Wilkes (TW)	Wales Environment Link
Hazel Lloyd Lubran (HL)	CVC Cymru
Phil Lewis (PL)	Valleys Regional Park

Welsh Government

Vaughan Gethin MS (MEcon)	Minister for the Economy (Chair)
Dawn Bowden MS (DMASCW)	Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip (Chair)
Andrew Chapman (AC)	Welsh Government (Secretariat)
Alison Sandford (AS)	Welsh Government
Janet Owen Jones (JJ)	Welsh Government
Elizabeth Crowther (EC)	Welsh Government
Steffan Roberts (SR)	Welsh Government
Lisa Claridge (LC)	Welsh Government
Gail Merriman (GM)	Welsh Government
Paul Kindred (PK)	Welsh Government

Agenda Item 1 - Welcome/Introduction

DMASCW welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted no need for formal introductions. It was positive that there were so many on the call and there were three main agenda items to get through in the time allocated. **DMASCW** let attendees know that **MEcon** was in another engagement and would be joining shortly. **DMASCW** introduced **MW**, Welsh Sports Association to present his paper

Agenda Item 2 Community Assets and Facilities:

Matthew Williams, Welsh Sports Association, Gareth Coles, Creative Lives.

MW thanked the group and **DMASCW** for taking the paper which was co-written with **GC**. The paper covered a number of issues which were a legacy of the pandemic faced by sports, culture, faith and other community-based organisations. **MW** explained how issues of accessibility, availability and disrepair were increasingly having a negative impact on local activity.

MW also highlighted wider issues around volunteers not returning and coming back into the sector following the pandemic. The cost-of-living crisis and in particular increasing energy prices were having a detrimental effect on group activity on the ground, (with many small locally based organisations struggling to generate enough income to cover the increased costs for their own buildings, or those they rent).

MW highlighted positive recent examples with Sports Wales small grant funding and asked if similar actions could be taken with the cultural sector and across the wider portfolio area to help meet this challenge. **MW** also suggested that there was limited information about the smaller venues (often run by organisations and faith groups) and to work in partnership with Welsh Government (multi partnership approach) to audit the organisations and issues on the ground.

GC echoed the key issues raised by **MW** and suggested that these required a collaborative response.

DMASCW reflected on the issues presented by **MW** and **GC**. **DMASCW** suggested that the paper be given detailed consideration and a written response be produced, (as the meeting was time limited and the issues wide ranging).

DMASCW outlined how the Welsh Government had put a large amount of funding into the sports and cultural sectors during the pandemic with the aim of allowing organisations to grow and develop after. **DMASCW** also explained how the Welsh Government was using every lever available to help those people who were most affected by the cost-of-living crisis. It would also be good to get a clearer picture of the current situation with community facilities.

It was also important that organisations consider applying for support through the Communities Facilities programme, particularly if issues exist around buildings or repairs. Welsh Government is alert to the issue of higher running costs and particularly where this is passed onto user groups. **DMASCW** stated that it is important that those who already struggle to engage are not excluded further from activity.

MW and **GC** welcomed feedback from **DMASCW**.

Action Point – Officials to consider and prepare a written response to the paper provided by MW and GC.

Agenda Item 3 - Levelling Up White Paper:

Matthew Brown, Wales Council for Voluntary Action.

MB explained how circumstances around the Shared Prosperity Fund had moved on slightly since the paper was originally written. Nonetheless, the general messages outlined in the paper still stand. **MB** reminded the group that the report highlighted issues for the third sector in Wales following the publishing of the UK Government's Levelling Up White Paper and also with processes around the Shared Prosperity Fund.

MB highlighted that there is soon to be a point when European Social Funding will end. This will cause a number of issues, (for example with the WCVA Active Inclusion programme). An ability to re-focus Shared Prosperity Funding retrospectively back to April would be advantage. **MB** also mentioned about the concerns shared with regard to timescale, and how this could lessen communication with the third sector. It would be useful to gain ministerial support to strengthen the third sectors voice in discussions, which will take place at a regional level.

MB also explained the importance that Shared Prosperity funding and processes were transparent. Could some programmes and projects be co-financed between the third sector and the Welsh Government to target key priorities.

DMASCW thanked **MB** for the paper and stated how the Shared Prosperity Fund had presented great challenges. This is also relevant to the third sector who have raised issues around directly accessing Shared Prosperity Funding.

MEcon joined the meeting and explained some key difficulties about the late stage at which UK Government entered into meaningful dialogue with Welsh Government and the challenging timescales faced.

MEcon stated that going forwards delivering investment plans within timescale was extremely ambitious. **MEcon** will convene meeting with Welsh Local Government Association so the conversation can be focused on third sector involvement. **MEcon** mentioned that regions are the best fit given the circumstances as the alternative would be individual plans and accompanying proposals for each local authority. An honest challenge will be made to enable the third sector to engage. There is also involvement from Cwmpas Cymru. Local authorities are aware of the challenges faced.

MEcon outlined how engagement could be managed (in partnership) with a focus on creating a broader stakeholder group that could take into account how plans are drawn up and operate. This would minimise meetings and be a direct and practical approach. There will also be pressure on what can be funded from the Shared Prosperity Fund and there maybe things of real value which may not directly be covered.

MEcon reminded the group about the pressures Welsh Government was under from the spring statement and current levels of inflation. **MEcon** supported the role the third sector could play and influence at a national level.

DW welcomed the idea of a stakeholder group. It would give the third sector a seat at the table and backbone for discussion at a regional level and across Wales, bringing coherence. **DW** mentioned the possible value in potentially matching regional investment with Welsh Government funding if available and to achieve shared values.

MEcon stated that he remained optimistic despite the challenges involved with the Shared Prosperity Fund. There maybe be a further conversation to be had with local authorities regarding business support not centrally covered. Additionally, **MEcon** reminded the group of the Multiply (UK Government) programme. **MEcon** stressed the importance of investing in the right people, communities and sectors to make a difference and to continue to try and use influence to ensure the funding helps those who need it most. It is a challenging creating plans in such timescales and **MEcon** suggested the need for flexibility to be a top consideration in meeting priorities for future years.

Nature Positive Economy through Nature Based Solutions:

Tabea Wilkes, Wales Environment Link.

TW outlined a series of policy recommendations for the delivery of a nature positive economy. This included proposals around the three main themes of enabling business to thrive in a nature-based economy, developing a clear policy framework for private investment into nature and also kickstarting a just transition towards a green workforce though a National Nature Service. **TW** welcomed the very recent developments around the National Nature Service and the opportunities which could follow. **TW** also illustrated the link between the National Nature Service and the Valleys Regional Park. **TW** also spoke about the need to link private with public investment to benefit nature recovery and biodiversity.

MEcon highlighted that he had recently met with **TW** and that the paper contributed to a large part of current ambition capturing several key elements. **MEcon** stated that it was important to have discussions across departments as nature was cross portfolio.

MEcon stated that Welsh Government was already engaged in a National Nature Service pilot and it was important to reflect on progress. **MEcon** explained how a greener economy was much more than setting up turbines and also mentioned the challenge in setting up robust environmental indicators.

MEcon mentioned that it was important to think further about how the proposals are measured and valued. Also, how to give value to anything outside of those proposals. Decisions to invest needed to be based on working out clear milestones.

MEcon explained the importance of making sure doors are open with officials and to work on developments with the Nation Nature Service pilot.

PL thanked **MEcon** for the opportunity discuss the developments around the National Nature Service pilot and its link to the Valleys Regional Park programme.

PL outlined how valuable input had been received from the Future Generations Commissioner and also Cwmpas in delivering a proof of concept. **PL** outlined how he had linked up to local, regional and national networks to look at sustainability and progression.

TW stated an interest in finding out the role of government in identifying private investment and how that could fill gaps. **TW** welcomed any further communication.

MEcon highlighted the issues of green washing, in particularly relation to land usage and how policy intent is achieved in comparison to land management. **MEcon** also outlined the fit between Wales and the wider UK agenda and how Wales currently didn't experience a direct return or benefit with existing systems in place.

MEcon explained that this was about creating a market and structure in Wales to reinvest funding in nature recovery. **MEcon** stated that the current timing is good as the public are connected to the environment around them. However, there are still challenges around changes and reductions of funding, linked to Brexit.

Any other business

There was no other business.

Comments from meeting chat:

[09:55]

09:55 Meeting started

[10:19] Hazel Lloyd Lubran

I'm happy to ask TSSW colleagues to support the Audit process with others - would be a vital next step.

[10:22] Hazel Lloyd Lubran

We've initially started scoping how we can "shift" existing or upcoming grant programmes to support community venues with increasing energy costs - Pen y Cymoedd and Comic Relief being a couple. Intelligence from applications may help inform the audit.

[10:54]

10:54 Meeting ended: 59m 44s