

**“What is living? The broad hall
found between narrow walls”**

Waldo Williams tr. Rowan Williams

Operational Plan 2024/25



CYNGOR LLYFRAU CYMRU
BOOKS COUNCIL of WALES

Contents

1.	Wales: A Reading Nation	3
2.	Our Mission	5
3.	Our Values	5
4.	Our Plans	6
4.1	Publishing Development	6
4.1.1	Welsh Language Content	7
4.1.2	English Language Content	9
4.2	Services to the Book Sector	11
4.2.1	Content Development: Editing & Design	11
4.2.2	Marketing & Promotion	12
4.2.3	Digital & Data Management	14
4.2.4	Sales & Distribution Services	15
4.3	#lovereading – Promoting the Value of Reading	16
4.4	Our Impact: Research & Evaluation	18
5.	Our Organisation & key operational priorities	19
5.1	Governance	19
5.2	Finance	19
5.3	Communications & Branding	19
5.4	Information Technology	20
5.5	Human Resources	20
5.6	Fundraising	20
6.	Our Partners	21
7.	Financial Information	26
	Appendix	27
1	Budget 2024/25	27
2	Breakdown of Costs 2024/25	28
3	Publishing Grants 2024/25	29

1 Wales: A Reading Nation

The year 2024/25 will be one of the most challenging since I undertook the role of Chief Executive in 2017. It is due to several factors converging, mainly the 10.5% cut to our budget following a decade of standstill funding, a difficult UK trading environment, and continuing pressure on salaries.

It was disappointing to see that the substantive contribution the Books Council is making to the Welsh language was not recognised; or the immediate and direct impact on the provision of books in support of the new curriculum; on provision for Welsh learners; or on publishers and booksellers spread across Wales, often in rural areas.

Any cuts to a budget must lead to difficult decisions, and this has also been true for us. After close consultation with publishers, both subcommittees agreed that priority should be given to protecting budgets that support revenue programmes and supported posts. All form the bedrock of the industry's output, and it cannot function without them.

This meant a severe reduction or total deletion of other budget lines and a reduction of posts at the Books Council:

- Advances to authors and designers to commission original books, both for adults and children is leading to less consumer choice and runs the risk of losing readers across subjects, especially in the provision of authentic Wales related content in the English-language.
- Marketing budgets were already very pressured but had been reduced to such a degree that the English language subcommittee cancelled their May meeting as there were insufficient funds available to warrant accepting applications. Yet English language publishers from Wales must compete with large multinational publishers based in London to be noticed by the media, booksellers and consumers and the very modest support they could draw on previously to help address this imbalance has shrunk even further.
- The budget for the new English language literary magazine tender had to be reduced in line with cuts across other budgets.
- The very modest grant for independent high

street booksellers supporting Welsh language books had to be deleted, leading to an even more pressured environment for an already fragile high street environment.

- The grant to work in partnership with Literature Wales to promote the Wales Book of the Year through retail outlets had to be deleted, leading to reduced coverage for Wales's most prestigious national literary award.
- The training budget had to be deleted completely, potentially leaving publishers without the skills to respond to the challenges and opportunities brought by AI and social media developments.
- For the Books Council it meant the deletion of a further three posts from our staffing structure, which was already reduced from 50 to 39 in response to the challenges brought by COVID and the ever- rising salary costs against a standstill budget. It should be noted that these posts were Welsh speaking, and fairly remunerated, with good terms and conditions (the Books Council follows the Green Book) and located in a rural area, and therefore carried a premium.
- We fear that this extreme contraction in capacity will make us less able or agile in responding to possible project funding, where staff time and capacity is not factored in.

Against this very sobering scenario, we very much welcomed the offer to run a 3rd round of the New Audiences Fund and additional funding made available in support of Welsh language magazines. Both are important temporary interventions which will bring some relief to immediate budgetary pressures but, as is usually the case with project funding, they do not allow for the more strategic longer-term commissioning and planning that all the creative industries depend on. We look forward to hosting a showcase event envisaged for autumn 2024 to celebrate the achievements and document the lasting change brought by this transformative programme. We will ask for expressions of interest by New Audiences Fund participants to join an internal advisory group, which will draw on their experiences and further develop our endeavors to achieve fair representation in our work.

Our Reading Promotion activities will again centre around the "reading for pleasure" agenda

and promote the transformational power of reading. Our Children's Books Department will continue to work closely with colleagues in Welsh Government Culture, Education and Welsh language Departments, building on a decade of fruitful cooperation regarding World Book Day, the Summer Reading Challenge, Quick Reads/ Stori Sydyn, Teachers Love Reading and other national schemes where BCW is the delivery partner in Wales.

Our Young People's Panel, now in its second year, continues to platform the voices of younger readers and their particular interests in digital formats and marketing.

It is a great pleasure to be delivering the 5th Welsh language programme round of the Reading Well scheme as a delivery partner of the Reading Agency, which is funded by Welsh Government Health Department to facilitate social prescribing in the community in support of people with dementia and Alzheimer's.

We will continue to support Publishing Wales, the publishers' association, in their efforts to showcase our rich and bilingual offer at international book fairs, and we hope that support for both Frankfurt and London Book Fairs will be provided building on last year's excellent results.

The Books Council, at the request of the stakeholder group, has taken a lead role in facilitating a bid for Aberystwyth/Ceredigion to apply for the UNESCO City of Literature status and we anticipate that the bid will be submitted in March 2025. We continue to work closely with all the partners which include the Town and County Councils, Aberystwyth University, the National Library and the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, and Wales Literature Exchange.

Our self-funded, not-for-profit Distribution Centre will continue to provide core services by supplying independents, chain and online retailers as well as the library, education, heritage and tourism sectors.

An important aspect will once again be delivering another round of successful festivals during the summer season, with the sales team making sure that heritage and leisure outlets are well supplied for the tourist seasons. They will all benefit from the additional functionality and capability of the new IT system which was implemented in March 2024, and we anticipate that we will reap the full benefits later in the year as user confidence increases and skills embed. We will continue discussions with Ceredigion

County Council with regards to securing support for an expansion of our premises. We are at full storage capacity and will need additional floor space to realise the business potential brought by the upgrade of the IT system.

We will continue to invest where possible in improving IT provisions, especially with regards to cyber security, our consumer retail platforms and additional services to publishers and booksellers. Whilst we have made great strides over recent years to de-carbonise our operations, budgetary constraints may make some planned investments impossible.

As our organisation follows the Green Book, we will continue to monitor the union negotiated salary settlements and report to our Board on the financial implications in the coming year, but we anticipate additional pressures and therefore further job losses.

The Board of Trustees approved another recruitment round this autumn due to the phased retirement of those trustees which transferred from the prior legal structure. As in previous years we will run an open recruitment process to reach the widest possible constituency whilst meeting the skills need.

2 Our Mission

Our main objectives, as set out in our constitution, are:

- (a)** to encourage and support the book industry in Wales by awarding grants and otherwise;
- (b)** to encourage, promote and assist the production and distribution of books and other literary and artistic material howsoever recorded (whether by known means or by means as yet unknown) in the two official languages of Wales, Welsh and English, or which are of Welsh interest;
- (c)** to organise events to support the promotion of books, reading and the book sector as a whole;
- (d)** to encourage and promote the publication of such books and other material in Wales.

3 Our Values

We believe

- ▶ in the transformative power of reading for pleasure and that it impacts positively on our well-being, mental health, educational attainment, and social and cultural capital
- ▶ in supporting a publishing sector that is open and welcoming, thrives on creativity and collaboration, and produces quality content that makes a positive contribution to the lives of people and the foundational economy in Wales
- ▶ that we need to be proactive in developing the sector to attract the people, skills and experiences that reflect all of Wales
- ▶ that the diverse cultures and languages of Wales enrich all aspects of our lives and communities
- ▶ that everyone should have access to books and magazines in print, digital or audio formats irrespective of their ability to afford them
- ▶ y Gymraeg belongs to all of us and is an integral part of our daily lives, heritage and culture
- ▶ that the many and multifaceted stories of Wales connect us to the wider world and help us to promote our nation within Europe and more globally.

4 Our Plans

In implementing this third year of our 5-year strategic plan, we are primarily concerned to maintain core activities following the disappointing 10.5% cut to our budget. Following consultation with publishers, we have put in place arrangements which will hopefully protect our fragile industry as much as possible.

We are mindful of the corrosive effect brought by this cut following years of standstill funding; the impact will be noticeable and long lasting. Less supported content will mean fewer opportunities for authors and other creatives, and less work too for freelancers. It is of real concern that we will lose talent and skills to other, better paying, sectors – not least to the London publishing scene. Readers in Wales will be less serviced with authentic content, and we are at risk of losing especially younger readers not only to other publishers but more broadly they will lose their interest in reading. Independent booksellers are already facing the most challenging of times, with most of our high streets in severe decline.

For our organization, the deletion of three posts from our structure will mean less advice, support, and training to publishers at the time when the sector is facing the greatest challenges. With this diminished capacity it will be much harder for us to seek out other grant funding and sponsors, or investing in building

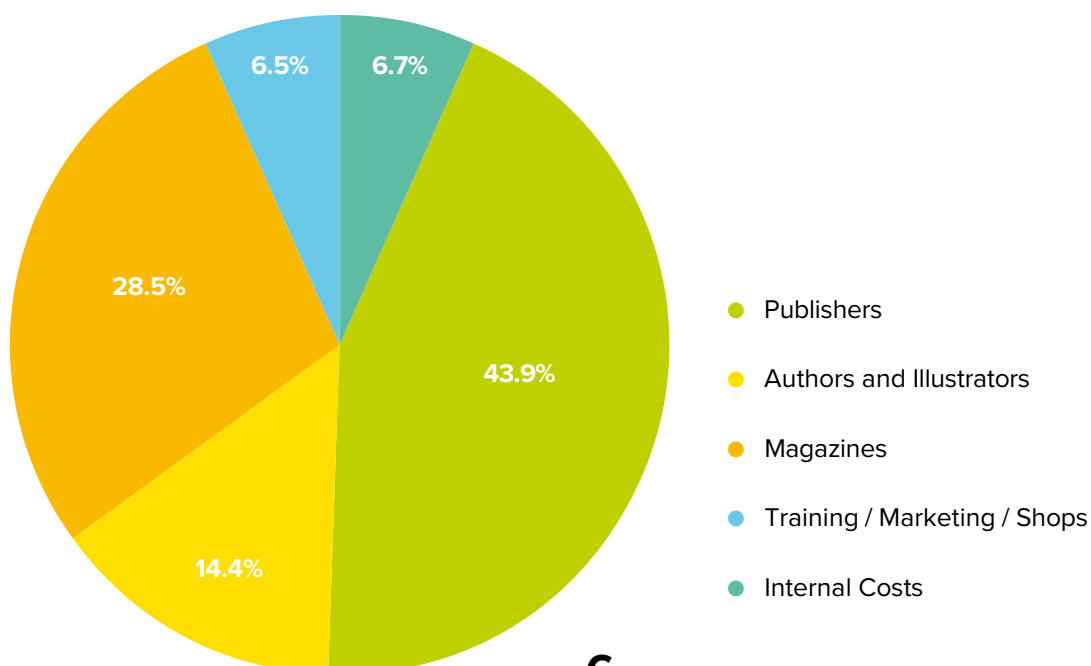
partnerships which could lead to longer term projects in support of a number of Welsh Government priorities.

We have a proud record of being agile and seeking additional funding whenever possible, running projects with no or low administration fees to ensure that funding can have the furthest possible reach – but this will not be feasible this year. Larger scale projects such as New Audiences Fund would need to include a ringfenced element for us to administer new projects effectively. Naturally, we look forward to continuing our very productive cooperation with Creative Wales and are hopeful that, jointly, we will be able to identify solutions for the dilemma brought not only to our organization, but to the sector as a whole.

4.1 Publishing Development

The purpose of our grant schemes is to ensure that a wide range of high-quality books that reflects Wales in all its diversity reaches the market in both Welsh and English. Publishing in both languages can pose significant commercial challenges for very different reasons and Government support (through the Books Council) is essential to ensure that Wales and the people of Wales are featured in its print culture, in paper-based products and online, in books and magazines, and that these products in turn promote and enrich the nation's civic life both culturally and politically.

The impact and reach of the publishing grant



4.1.1 Welsh Language Content

The severe cuts in budget for 2024/25 mean that many of the elements that support Welsh-language publishing have been reduced or eliminated, from training opportunities to grants for freelance writers. We are alarmed both on behalf of the industry and more widely than that; it is a concern in terms of the provision available for Welsh readers of all levels and interests, Welsh-language learners and school students. Despite this, we will continue to strive to provide the large range of high-quality and engaging books that mirror the wide range of interests represented in Welsh-language readers of all ages. Publishers in Wales are mainly micro enterprises, mostly located in rural areas across the whole of Wales, and as such have a profound impact on the foundational economy. We support publishers to improve the quality of books, and to increase the variety of books and magazines published; we support high-quality authors, designers, and

publishers to write, illustrate, design and edit Welsh-language books and magazines. We will work with existing publishers to improve diversity in terms of content and the workforce and make every effort to ensure that opportunities and support are available for individuals to venture into publishing for the first time. We will work closely with the sector to ensure that the appropriate policies are adopted and implemented; that barriers are removed, and ensure development opportunities for Welsh speakers from minoritized backgrounds. We are committed to challenging incumbency and proactively seek opportunities to attract new applicants and audiences, both within the existing grant system and for any additional project funding. We will continue our support for Cwlwm Cyhoeddwyr and Cyhoeddi Cymru Publishing Wales with regards to training skills, best practice, and presence at international bookfairs.

Objective	Benchmark or evaluation method	Target 2024/25
Welsh Language Content		
Books		
Implement cuts of 10.5% in the publishing budget creating as little permanent damage as possible.	Limit the investment. Approve a smaller number of applications with a smaller budget total	Keep to the budget
Administer the first programmes resulting from the Investment Survey 2022 and corresponding editorial posts.	Evaluate and collect data	Maintain 7 successful programme publishers
Support the production of a wide variety of quality books for adults and children.	No. of programme books produced	122
Support specialist titles that make a valuable cultural contribution, and support smaller publishers to publish popular books through the Individual Publishing Grants.	Number of Individual Publishing Grant titles published	30
Ensure children’s books provide a good balance between adaptation and original content (in line with the recommendations of the Rosser Report, 2017).	The medium-term aim is to achieve parity between originals and adaptations	50% original

Ensure investment in good quality authors.	No. of titles supported through Author Grant (A)	15
Ensure investment in visually appealing books, which are well designed and with engaging content.	No. of titles supported through Visual Grant (A)	25
Ensure that publishers market books to the widest possible audience and ensure that every book reaches its own market potential.	Average sales for books supported by programme grants	750 after 18 months
Ensure that original books produced are also available as e-books.	Percentage of original relevant funded books that are converted into e-books	50%
Give support to publishers by providing 75% funding for creative editor posts.	No. of jobs [FTEs] supported	12
Continue to provide training for editors by offering courses and mentoring sessions.	No. of training sessions	0
Provide support for marketing activities by publishers, ensuring that booksellers are an integral part of any promotional events and activities.	No. of marketing grants to the main publishers	6
	Marketing grants to individual books	10

Objective	Benchmark or evaluation method	Target 2024/25
Welsh Language Content		
Online Welsh-language News Service		
Maintain the Golwg 360 news service.	Quarterly reports to be received promptly and showing progress against relevant criteria	100%
Magazines		
Ensure a variety of printed and online Welsh-language magazines are funded and reach a diverse and growing market.	No. of magazines produced	16
Monitor average sales.	Sales to be reported in September 2025	Leisure – 2,400 News – 1,500 Children's – 2,700 Literary & Cultural – 700
Ensure magazines are produced and delivered to market on a timely basis.	Regular publishing schedules	98%

4.1.2 English Language Content

The severe budget cuts have meant that many of the elements that support English-language publishing in Wales have been reduced or eliminated – from training opportunities to grants for freelance writers. With this being a much smaller fund than the Welsh one, this situation is grave, especially when taking into consideration the might of the competition from London-based publishers. Quality content about Wales or which accurately and authentically reflects Wales in the English language is now further diminished which is a concern in terms of Wales's portrayal globally but also when it come to supporting the demands of the new curriculum. Despite this, we will continue to strive to provide a wide range of attractive, high-quality books and magazines that reflect the variety of interests represented by readers of all ages from Wales. The purpose of supporting English-language publications from Wales is to ensure that there is a significant English-language publishing industry in Wales

that produces a diverse range of titles that reflect the unique culture of Wales, by publishing authentic voices drawn from the variety of lived experiences represented in our communities. English-language titles from Wales compete within the highly commercial global English-language publishing industry which is focused on international best-sellers. The purpose of our grant is to ensure that new voices from Wales have an opportunity to be published, that people in Wales have access to high-quality content that is relevant to them, and to support publishing output which represents Wales in all its diversity at an international level. We will continue to work with the sector to strive for fair representation with regards to authors, illustrators, topics and themes funded by us and will use the latest census figures as a benchmark to measure our impact in this particular area.

We will continue to report to the Board of Trustees and Creative Wales by providing regular updates of our Fair Representation Report.

Objective	Benchmark or evaluation method	Target 2024/25
English Language Content		
Books		
Facilitate a variety of books that give insight into the rich multicultural communities of Wales and generally enrich the programme of those publishers supported via the Revenue Franchise Grant.	No. of Revenue titles published	42
Support independent Welsh publishers to remain competitive with major publishers by awarding funding to retain developed authors or to develop new talent via the Author Advance Grants.	No. of books published that have Author Advances awarded	10
	Average sales expected for titles in receipt of Author Advance Grants	2,000
Support specialist titles which make a valuable cultural contribution via the Individual Literary Book Grants.	No. of titles published in receipt of a grant	15
Encourage the use of imaginative marketing strategies aimed at reaching the widest possible market with a focus on generating vital sales revenue via the Marketing Grant.	No. of books published with marketing grants provided	15
	Average sales expected for titles in receipt of a marketing grant	2,000

Support strategically important posts within the sector by providing grants of up to 75% of wage costs for marketing and editorial posts.	No. of full-time posts supported	9
Provide training opportunities for publishing staff.	No. of training sessions provided to publishers per annum	2
Support the publication of new editions of classic titles from English-language Welsh literature with the launch of a Classics Grant.	No. of titles published	0

Objective	Benchmark or evaluation method	Target 2024/25
English Language Content		
Magazines		
Support established digital and print magazines that contribute to Welsh culture and provide a vital platform for high-quality content, analysis and debate on a wide range of subjects with the Cultural Periodicals Grant.	No. of titles funded	5
	Minimum sales values, across print and digital platforms	1,000
	'General' cultural magazines	400
	Multi-focused literary magazines	300
	Single-focus literary magazines	300
Undertake a tender process for a new English-language cultural Magazine.	Conduct a successful process in good time for October 2024	Conduct the process
Support small-scale digital and print publications that showcase a variety of new creative talent with the Small Literary Magazines Grant.	No. of titles funded	1
Ensure magazines are produced and delivered to market in a timely manner.	Content published to an agreed schedule	98%

4.2 Services to the Book Sector

The wide range of services we provide to the book sector have very distinct purposes and are broadly based on the following areas:

- **Content Development:** to ensure and develop a high quality of editorial and design standards for books from Wales, with a particular focus on developing key areas;
- **Marketing & Promotion:** to support and amplify the efforts of individual publishers and bookshops and provide collective platforms with regard to particular themes or events. Industry and sector to attend festivals, events, conferences and fairs;
- **Digital & Data Management:** to support internationally adopted data systems to ensure accessibility of information about content from Wales and provide access to a standard book trade system such as EDI and BATCH; provide and develop platforms such as ffolio.wales and gwales.com;
- **Sales & Distribution Services:** distribution and wholesaling to independents, chains and online retailers, reaching new audiences worldwide; bespoke field-based sales services to libraries, schools, and tourism & heritage sectors; curate meaningful and relevant offers to support the differing needs and requirements of a diverse customer base.

Objective	Benchmark or evaluation method	Target 2024/25
4.2.1 Content Development: Editing & Design		
Offer proofreading and copy-editing services to publishers, together with advice and guidance to the creative editors working in the publishing houses.	No. of manuscripts edited	170
Provide a design service of the highest quality to publishing houses, and work with smaller publishers to improve the visual aspect of their publications.	No. of book covers or design projects undertaken	110
Provide feedback to Publishing Development Subcommittees with regard to grant applications and areas requiring improvement.	Feedback given when sought	100%
Provide guidance to the sector through training and advice.	Involvement in relevant training arranged	100%

Objective	Target 2024/25
4.2.2 Marketing & Promotion	
Support the industry	
Support and promote booksellers and publishers equitably, providing information and opportunities for them to take advantage of Books Council promotional activity on digital and offline platforms and at events if they so wish.	Contribute to regular meetings with booksellers and publishers (CCPW/ Cwlwm) to share opportunities and gather feedback Share content from shops and publishers on social media where BCW is tagged Prioritise #ChooseBookshops messaging in social media content, and amplify national campaigns such as Independent Bookshop Week and others Support and celebrate new publications, for example through campaigns such as Book of the Month, providing opportunities for publishers to amplify promotion by supplying extra content as they wish
Support the sale of books and magazines, and promote bookshops.	Design Department to produce two catalogues a year (summer and winter) in good time to promote new titles ahead of key sales periods. Catalogues to be supported by distribution plan and digital assets Develop a series of reading / gift recommendations for key dates Promote the range of magazines in both languages regularly across our channels Continue to develop a series of digital assets to promote key dates and events (Christmas, summer reading, Sale, special days) and distribute to the sector. Gather feedback on what works and what doesn't to develop and improve the resources available

Objective		Target 2024/25
Support Reading for Pleasure		
Create and deliver promotional campaigns for the main programmes (e.g. World Book Day, Summer Reading Challenge, Reading Well/Darllen yn Well, Tir na n-Og) that reach target audiences.		Collaborate with the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department to provide timely promotional campaigns and post-campaign evaluation for: • World Book Day • World Book and Copyright Day UNESCO / International Day of the Book UNESCO • Tir na n-Og Awards • Summer Reading Challenge • Reading Well/Darllen yn Well • Book cover of the Year
Create content that inspires and celebrates reading for pleasure, for children, young adults, adults and learners. We will test and evaluate new ideas to engage and reach new audiences.		Work with the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department to develop a series of podcasts for children and young adults Develop a series of reading recommendation articles for seasonal themes / key dates Test new content on our social media channels Work with the Young People's Panel in order to collect feedback on our content and to identify opportunities to develop new content Maximise opportunity offered by AM and continue partnership to create and share new content on our <i>Love Reading / Caru Darllen</i> channel
Promote access to books for all.		Promotion of libraries and sharing of libraries' content across our social media channels Promote platforms such as Ffolio, audio books and e-books

Objective	Target 2024/25
Communications	
Communications and brand guidelines demonstrate that the sector is open and welcoming to all. Our values are reflected in our key messages across all channels and content. We work with partners in the industry to reach diverse audiences and stakeholders with our news stories.	Deliver a strand of communications activity to focus on BCW impact and work Share the opportunities available for people to work with us or to benefit from our services (i.e. publishing grants, advertising jobs and volunteering opportunities on our panels.) Share news about our work to show the impact and results of our activities Work with partners to promote the publishing sector
In line with the priorities in our Strategic Plan, particular support/emphasis will be given to activity which demonstrates commitment to investing in diverse content, authors and formats.	Activity that advances diversity in Welsh publishing will be amplified
Continue with a programme of work to develop the Books Council's website https://books.wales to ensure that stakeholders have easy access to grants, services and information.	Website Group to meet regularly to agree a programme of work and implement improvements to the website
Support special projects, including • Rhyngom • New Audiences Grant • New system at the Distribution Centre	Develop and deliver comms activities that support special projects across the departments

Objective	Benchmark or evaluation method	Target 2024/25
4.2.3 Digital & Data Management		
Provide, update and expand the offer and functionality of ffolio.wales and gwales.com	No. of e-books available	1,500
Extend the use of bibliographical data standards such as ONIX 3, THEMA and ISNI to ensure that information about content from Wales is fully and freely available internationally. Provide training to publishers as needed.	Training sessions provided on metadata to publishers	1
Extend the use of EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) to facilitate electronic order processing and communications with booksellers, wholesalers and other customers such as libraries.	EDI succession plan in place	Transfer to Nielsen

Objective	Benchmark or evaluation method	Target 2024/25
4.2.4 Sales & Distribution Services		
Ensure a quality distribution service to all publishers and that sales recover following COVID.	Distribution Centre sales	Gross sales: £4m Net sales: £2.64m (broken down below)
Maintain excellent relationships by adding value through bespoke services and curated offers which are relevant to a wide range of customers such as Cadw, Waterstones, WHSmith, Gardners and Amazon.	Net sales	£880,000
Develop the sector in the North by offering new options and targeting new locations.	Net sales	£880,000
Develop the sector in the South by offering new options and targeting new locations.	Net sales	£880,000
Promote the use of gwales.com and ffolio.wales by working closely with the marketing team and by offering excellent customer services with regard to enquiries and after-sales support.	Sales to individuals	Gross sales: £75,000
	No. of registered gwales users	17,000
Support independent bookshops through the Outreach Scheme, support for publisher and author events, regular bookseller meetings and advice on digital developments and business opportunities.	Impact of Outreach Scheme	Additional sales generated: £100,000
Continue to review and evaluate the environmental impact of packaging materials and carriage arrangements by reducing the use of plastic and reducing unnecessary journeys and/or working in partnership with other carrier arrangements.	Target level of returned books	10%
Provide the best customer experience by ensuring that all enquiries are answered in a professional and courteous manner in both languages.	No. of phone calls answered by customer services team	95%

4.3 #lovereading – Promoting the Value of Reading

The appreciation for and love of books and reading runs right through our organisation. Helping all people, but especially children, to form a lifelong habit of reading is central to our work. Our emphasis is on reading for pleasure, which is not immediately tied to educational attainment. Research shows how

regular reading supports several positive outcomes, in terms of mental health and well-being as well as educational and professional success. Our programmes aim to raise the profile of, and promote, children's books in both languages within school and leisure settings.

Objective	Target 2024/25
Advocate for the Welsh Government to adopt a plan to gift a book annually to school children across Wales as a core funding priority.	Use the evaluation of the Schools Love Reading scheme to continue to advocate for an annual book gifting scheme to school children in Wales
Liaise with Welsh Government officers, education consortia and local authorities to promote reading for pleasure and other curriculum resources, such as the <i>Children's and Young Adults' Yearbook</i> and other materials and digital content to support the delivery of the curriculum.	Regular dialogue with stakeholders about materials that promote reading for pleasure and educational resources. Maintain a Teachers Love Reading network to inspire and raise awareness of the various books available to KS2 learners
Promote reading for pleasure within schools by coordinating the BookSlam/Gornest Lyfrau competitions, ensuring that they are aligned with the aims and objectives of curriculum development.	Promote the list of books to improve teachers' knowledge of titles. The competitions encourage learners to get hooked on reading, fostering positive and long-term attitudes towards reading
Extend partnerships with libraries, and facilitate links with schools and access to books.	Establish a network of stakeholders to assist in compiling a comprehensive review of the school library provision in Wales
Support Welsh Government's National Literacy Programme by • coordinating the activities to celebrate World Book Day 2025; • supporting the Summer Reading Challenge in conjunction with schools and libraries. Emphasis will be placed on targeting and reaching pupils within disadvantaged areas throughout Wales; • continuing the Quick Reads/Stori Sydyn series to target reluctant readers, both children and adults.	New additional £1 Welsh-language title Increased curated Wales-specific content for SRC website Evaluation of Quick Reads campaign following the promotional campaign in 2024. Receive feedback from members of the Young People's Panel.
Ensure coverage of publications, projects, or news relevant to the areas of children's and young adults' literature in Wales on the @LlyfrDaFabBooks social media accounts.	Increase in traffic within social media accounts as a result of specific campaigns (e.g. World Book Day, Tir na n-Og)

Promote and organise the Tir na n-Og Awards to recognise excellence in the field of children's books in both languages and increase diversity in the judging panels to reach more diverse communities. Ensure the widest possible promotion throughout the media in Wales. Evaluate and provide feedback on submissions to develop the provision of Reading for Pleasure for young readers.	Increase of 20% in schools participating in shadowing scheme Media presence across all platforms during campaign Feedback via judges' report to Publishing Development Subcommittee Diverse membership within judging panels and within the Young People's Panel
Collaborate with members and representatives of partner organisations on the Reading Promotion Subcommittee to identify and develop reading for pleasure opportunities.	Regular dialogue with partners to share and develop Reading for Pleasure messaging
Provide feedback and guidance on the development of children's and young adults' literature to the Publishing Development Subcommittee, by arranging a biannual Reading Promotion Books Subcommittee.	Establish a partnership of representatives from the Reading Promotion Subcommittee to act as advisers to the Publishing Development Subcommittee Review diversity of Children's Books Subcommittee
Arrange Author Tour campaigns – working with authors, publishers, booksellers, schools and libraries across Wales to increase the opportunities for children to meet a diverse range of authors.	Coordinate a programme of regular digital and live author events with partner organisations
Collaborate with partners such as Mudiad Meithrin to create lists of suitable books and promote books that are suitable for learners	Establish '5 dan 5' – a post every term on social media that promotes new, diverse and original books suitable for children under 5 years of age. Mudiad Meithrin will share the post with all their cylchoedd and stakeholders

4.4 Our Impact: Research & Evaluation

Budgets permitting, we will continue our investment in research and evaluation of our current activities in order to use the

evidence to help us further develop our activities, with a particular focus on the following:

Action	Outcome
Commission an external evaluation of the New Audiences Fund, to consider questions of the process of applying, how we responded, what participants achieved, and the difference made by the fund.	To gain participant feedback on the ease of process allowing us to improve accessibility both for one-off projects and other funds as well. To hear the participants' feedback on what they achieved and the difference it made in their communities. To practically inform future funding opportunities.
Continue internal evaluations via subcommittee assessments, reader reports and staff assessments of titles, themes and authors funded. Report formally to the Board via the Fair Representation Reports.	Ensure that work towards fair representation continues and grants are directed at priority areas.
Invest in supporting and training publishers to use the industry standard data classification systems THEMA and ONIX more widely.	Ease of data analysis by running subject specific reports. Classifications applied by the IP holder not by the funding.
Investigate the feasibility of research into the reading habits of readers of all abilities, interests and backgrounds through cooperation with the organisations Sport Wales, Football Association of Wales, Welsh Rugby Union, Young Farmers, National Farmers' Union, Race Council Cymru, Disability Arts Cymru.	Give particular attention to non-Welsh-speaking audiences and how to engage them with Anglophone content from Wales. Give particular attention to accessibility and format needs to widen participation.
Feed the KESS PhD findings on the internationalisation of children's literature into the business plans of the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department.	Target setting based on recommendations with regard to content and IP development in view of the ambitions for a national presence at international book fairs.
Organise and carry out an evaluation of Quick Reads/Stori Sydyn provision within Wales.	Assess impact of the effectiveness of current activities, especially with a view to increasing participation.
Assess research carried out by Creative Wales with regards to performance of the publishing sector	Use data to inform policy decision and underpin target intervention such as furthering greater diversity in the sector when setting priorities for project funding such as New Audiences.

5 Our Organisation & key operational priorities

The priorities outlined in our 5-year strategic plan provide clear direction for all our departments, with a strong emphasis on fair representation: this not only applies to the content, businesses and jobs we support but also to our own organisation. Whilst our board, subcommittees and judging panels are measurably more diverse, taking into account all protected characteristics, we continually strive to ensure that all aspects of our work truly reflect all our communities in Wales. The decarbonisation of the sector we support and of our Distribution Centre continues to be a priority as we face the global climate emergency.

5.1 Governance

- Hold four board meetings during the financial year.
- Hold an annual meeting for trustees and the membership.
- Hold Quarterly meetings with Creative Wales to update on progress and evaluate.
- Meet with the Minister and Welsh Government Officers twice a year to give an overview of work and highlight strategic priorities.
- Continue to implement the current Strategic Plan.
- Continue to deliver a training programme for trustees as required.
- Ensure that safeguarding policies are reviewed on a regular basis.
- Ensure that the environmental impact of our work is assessed regularly.
- Ensure that the risk register is reviewed and updated on a regular basis, and that efforts are made to minimise risks.

5.2 Finance

- Implement the Operational Plan by ensuring that the budget provides adequate funding and resources to deliver our mission.
- Prepare the annual statutory accounts for 2023/24 by the agreed deadlines and receive a clean audit report.
- Ensure that departments receive regular finance reports to use the Council's funds sensibly ensuring value for money.
- Undertake a full review of long-term pension options with Dyfed Pension Scheme to reduce future liabilities.
- Ensure that the Operational Plan helps us to deliver Welsh Government policies, including the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

5.3 Communications & Branding

- Implement and deliver the 2024/25 Communications Plan, to support the objectives and delivery of the 5-year Strategic Plan.
- Embed the Books Council Brand Guidelines, including guidance on Creative Wales branding requirements, and acknowledgement of Welsh Government sponsorship as appropriate.
- Plan for the launch of the new BookHub.Cymru brand for the Distribution Centre that resonates with the commercial nature of the work and promote its services.
- Continue to work closely with Creative Wales to develop a coordinated and integrated approach to marketing and communications.

5.4 Information Technology

- Continue with the further implementation after the successful switch over, ensuring effective collaboration with the service provider and reporting regularly on progress to the steering group and Board of Trustees, with regular reports on system development.
- Undertake a programme of staff training to ensure they have the necessary skills for the needs of the business which will transform the way our business works, enabling us to compete and operate safely and effectively.
- Expand the use of the SharePoint system internally and encourage its use to share information with committees, publishers and booksellers, in order to save on printing and posting and to share information regularly.
- Investigate new systems which support online meetings of the Board of Trustees, the subcommittees, the Management Team and departments.
- Prioritise work that strengthens the Council's ability to deal with a cyber-attack and aim to meet the requirements of Cyber Essential by the end of 2025.
- Update the hardware and networks of both sites to accelerate processing and to reduce the risk of losing data or time due to network loss.

5.5 Human Resources

- Expand use of BrightSafe system ensuring that all members of staff undertake Health and Safety training at least once a year.
- Ensure that every member of staff has a current job description, with targets set for them as part of the annual appraisal process.
- Identify opportunities to train and develop members of staff for them to gain flexible and transferable skills that will enable them to respond to any new opportunities, and make the most effective use of the technology.
- Ensure best use is made of the Books Council's HR system – BrightHR.

5.6 Fundraising

- Collaborate with the Head of Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department to make a bid for a £7 book token for secondary schools, county councils and housing associations.
- Collaborate with Board members to develop opportunities with corporate sponsors.
- Review the terms of the Friends of the Books Council looking at a campaign to encourage new members

6. Our Partners

Working collaboratively lies at the very heart of our work, and is best illustrated by the wide range of partnerships we have built over the years and will continue to build. We are extremely pleased to be collaborating with the following:

Welsh Government	General • Exchange information and experience about grant schemes and commissioning books Creative Wales • Liaise closely with the officials responsible for sponsorship of the Books Council • Explore further opportunities to support the sustainability and growth of the publishing sector, including support for events and book fairs • Proactively support cross-sectoral cooperation in the wider arts, making the most of the content output already supported through the grants system • Contribute to skills development in the sector • Contribute to furthering diversity and inclusion in the sector and increasing representation in published materials Education and Public Services Department Curriculum & Assessment Division • Support Curriculum for Wales 2022 through: › proactively engaging with Areas of Learning that will benefit from leisure content supported by our grants system › providing a holistic overview of available resources and assisting in developing strategies to reduce reliance on publishers based outside Wales • Run programmes to support the National Literacy Programme and the objectives of the Child Poverty Strategy • Coordinate World Book Day activities and the reading promotion schemes as part of the Welsh Government's National Literacy Programme • Collaborate on the Quick Reads/Stori Sydyn project as part of the Basic Skills Strategy • Contribute to the Steering Group for new resources for the new curriculum and proactively encourage partnership working within the publishing sector
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Welsh Government
continued

Welsh Language Division

- Continue to support Cymraeg 2050 by working closely with the National Centre for Learning Welsh and supporting specific initiatives such as:
 - Cymraeg Campus
 - Contribute to the Language Technology Board
- Cooperate with the National Centre for Learning Welsh by continuing to encourage and support publishers to add to Cyfres Amdani, the series for learners, and identify other gaps in resources

***Economy, Energy and Welsh Language Department
Tourism Development and Major Events Division***

- Support Prosperity for All through continuous investment in skills and training for the book sector which is part of the foundational economy in rural Wales
- Promote books as part of the Welsh Government's themed years programme (Trails – 2023 & 2024)

Culture Division

- Maintain and develop the gwales/libraries website for use by the libraries
- Administer the Summer Reading Challenge grant to libraries
- Utilise the grant for distribution of Darllen yn Well (Reading Well) titles to local authorities/libraries

Health and Social Services Department

- Administer the Reading Well scheme for the publication of books on well-being and mental health in collaboration with The Reading Agency
- Collaborate with Public Health Wales to ensure community engagement with the Reading Well scheme
- Proactively promote the scheme in libraries and bookshops

Department for International Relations

- Support the three pillars of the International Strategy (2020) – Creativity, Sustainability and Technology – and contribute content to This is Wales
- Support the thematic year of 'Wales in India' where possible
- Contribute to the stakeholder group meetings when requested

Arts Council of Wales / Wales Arts International / Literature Wales	• Cooperate on the Book of the Year awards • Literature Wales to contribute to World Book Day activities • Contribute to the development of an international strategy for Literature from Wales • Cooperate on future London Book Fair events with CCPW • Cooperate on opportunities for courses in Tŷ Newydd • Participate in Literature Wales bursary panels • Continue to maintain Literature Wales' attendance in an ex-officio capacity of BCW Publishing Development Subcommittees • Collaborate on the Bardd Plant Cymru scheme • Joint bid for Frankfurt Book Fair
National Library of Wales	• Cooperate on exchanging information between NLW catalogue and gwales database • Provide additional services such as home delivery for shop customers
National Museum Wales	• Exchange information on relevant projects
Race Council Cymru	• Continue to build on established relationships and seek opportunities for further collaboration
Diversity and Anti-Racist Professional Learning (DARPL)	• Continue to work together on the <i>Rhyngom</i> project and seek other opportunities for further collaboration
Disability Wales	• Continue to build on established relationships and seek opportunities for further collaboration
Future Generations	• Continue to work to support the objectives of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and the well-being goals
Booksellers Association of the United Kingdom and Ireland	• Cooperate on existing schemes such as Books Are My Bag • Liaise with the subgroup 'Booksellers Wales' • Explore opportunities for a Wales-specific Christmas catalogue
Independent Publishers Guild	• Liaise on adapting their skills hub for the sector in Wales • Share industry insights and learnings
Cyhoeddi Cymru / Publishing Wales	• Exchange information on relevant projects • Continue to cooperate regarding a national presence for Wales at international book fairs with Wales Literature Exchange / Creative Wales
Wales Literature Exchange	• Exchange information on relevant projects • Continue to cooperate regarding a national presence for Wales at international book fairs with CCPW / Creative Wales
Publishers Association	• Liaise on best practice to reduce environmental impact • Liaise on fostering greater diversity and within the workforce
The Bookseller Magazine	• Share information about the Books Council and the publishing industry in Wales through <i>The Bookseller</i> • Work with <i>The Bookseller</i> on content to support the annual Wales Focus issue and include additional news stories for the industry

Bookshop.org	• Support bookshops to join the platform and develop distribution partnership • Explore direct distribution partnership to ensure inclusion of Wales-related titles
The Reading Agency	• Deliver the fifth Reading Well scheme in the Welsh language • Deliver the Summer Reading Challenge
BookTrust Cymru	• Participate in a reading promotion scheme, explore further cooperation opportunities, and exchange information on relevant projects • Exhibit at BookTrust Cymru conferences
Read for Good	• Extend the existing scheme, making more books available to children's wards in hospitals
Empathy Lab	• Develop and coordinate a bespoke programme for Wales in both languages
Libraries	• Exchange information with CILIP Cymru Wales especially concerning school librarians • Exhibit at the annual CILIP Cymru Wales conference or support the event online • Arrange the Tir na n-Og Awards, partly sponsored by CILIP Cymru Wales (Kathleen Cooks Bequest) • Cooperate with the Society of Chief Librarians Wales on reading promotion schemes
Urdd Gobaith Cymru	• Promote the Tir na n-Og Awards and the Welsh-language Children's Poet Laureate • Support the presence of a bookshop at the festival • Support the membership magazine
Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru	• Provide editorial and design services for award winners and publications • Attend their central literary panel in an ex-officio capacity
Hay Festival	• Support the presence of a bookshop at the festival
Royal Welsh Show	• Support the presence of a bookshop at the festival
AM Platform	• Continue to develop our channels and provide regular content on the platform • Support publishers and booksellers to expand use and presence on the platform

S4C / BBC / ITV and other media providers	• The Welsh-language Children's Poet Laureate (Bardd Plant Cymru) • Promotion of the Tir na n-Og shortlist and winners on Radio Wales, Radio Cymru and S4C • Identify opportunities to promote reading and books by means of specific programmes • Engage with commissioners on a regular basis to discuss turning books into programmes
Other Welsh Government Sponsored Bodies	• Cooperate on staff training and HR matters with a particular focus on diversity and inclusion in general • Liaise with members of Grŵp Hyrwyddo'r Gymraeg (Welsh Language Promotion Group) and share relevant information, identifying shared learning and training opportunities, especially with regard to diversity and inclusion within a Welsh-language setting
Welsh Universities / FE Colleges	• Seek partnerships with Welsh universities who may be able to conduct in-depth research into particular fields which are of interest to BCW, e.g. marketing or children's books • Continue to promote the book sector as a career choice by attending career fairs, contributing to modules, or enabling work placements
Wales TUC Cymru	• Build on the relationship established during the National Year of Reading with a view to promoting books and reading in the workplace
Transport for Wales	• Tales on the Rails scheme, National Poetry Day • Investigate additional opportunities for cooperation
WJEC	• Share information regarding commissioning educational reading materials
Adnodd	• Continue discussion about cooperation models which build on the existing and already funded infrastructure in Wales • Ensure that information is readily available on existing content, explore the potential for re-use to ensure that budgets are concentrating on areas of real and evidenced need rather than on anecdotal testimony • ensure that publishers in Wales are given every opportunity to participate in providing resources for the curriculum • Provide guidance and advice on tendering and funding process which are mindful of the size and administrative capacity of publishers in Wales

7. Financial Information

The sums allocated by the Welsh Government for 2024/25 are shown below.

	2023/24	2024/25
Core Funding – Creative Wales	£	£
Towards Specialist Departments	842,801	745,453
Governance and Central Costs	286,477	265,251
	1,129,278	1,010,704
Capital Grant	30,000	30,000
Grants for Distribution		
Publishing Grants	2,600,722	2,327,646
	3,760,000	3,368,350

The appendices present detailed estimates for 2024/25.

Project funding is also available in 2024/25 from the Welsh Government's Department for Education and Skills:

Reader Development Schemes	£140,000
Rhyngom Project	£100,000

Project funding is also available in 2024/25 from the Welsh Government's Culture Division:

Reader Development Schemes	£22,200
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Project funding is also available in 2024/25 from the Welsh Government's Department for Health (indirectly via Reading Agency):

Reading Well Schemes	£200,000
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It will be possible to undertake all the work described in this Plan in accordance with the funding allocated by the Welsh Government for 2024/25.

Appendix 1

Budget 2024/25

Income

£

Creative Wales Core Funding (Welsh Government)		
Specialist Department Direct Costs	745,453	
General Overheads and Running Costs	265,251	
Capital Grant	30,000	
Grants to be distributed		
Publishing Grants	2,327,646	
Other sources of income for projects:		3,368,350
Welsh Government: Department for Education and Skills		
Reading Promotion Schemes	140,000	
Rhyngom Scheme	100,000	
Welsh Government: Culture Division		
Reading Promotion Schemes	22,200	
Reading Agency		
Reading Well Scheme	200,000	
		462,200
Departmental Income		202,000
Distribution Centre		3,056,200
Total Income		7,088,750

Expenditure

Specialist Department Direct Costs	937,453	
Central Services and Governance Costs	275,251	
Project expenditure		
Reading Promotion Schemes	162,200	
Rhyngom Scheme	100,000	
Reading Well Scheme project	200,000	
Capital Costs	30,000	
Grants to be distributed		
Publishing Grants	2,327,646	
Distribution Centre	3,056,200	
Total Expenditure		7,088,750

Appendix 2

Breakdown of Costs 2024/25

Expenditure

	SALARIES	OTHER COSTS	INCOME	NET	TOTAL
Specialist Department Direct Costs					
Communications, Marketing and Design Department					
Communications and Marketing	83,867	7,500	–	(7,500)	91,367
National Festivals and Supplements	–	111,000	80,000	–	31,000
Design	99,881	5,000	25,000	20,000	79,881
Book reviews	–	2,000	–	(2,000)	2,000
Corporate Department					
Sales	152,100	17,000	–	(17,000)	169,100
Finance and Customer Services	206,603	31,968	60,000	28,032	178,571
Outreach Scheme	–	18,000	–	(18,000)	18,000
Publishing Development Department					
Editorial	102,571	7,000	20,000	13,000	89,571
Children's Books and Reading Promotion					
Reading promotion activities	56,398	36,565	7,000	(29,565)	85,963
Total Specialist Department Direct Costs	701,420	236,033	192,000	(13,033)	745,453
Governance and General Overheads					
Other governance costs	145,691	129,560	10,000	(119,560)	265,251
Total Costs	145,691	129,560	10,000	(119,560)	265,251
Grant administration	182,066	15,671	197,737	182,066	–
Welsh Government Education project	86,265	75,935	162,200	86,265	–
Reading Well project	46,569	153,431	200,000	46,569	–
Rhyngom project	40,395	59,605	100,000	40,395	–
Other projects	52,831	–	52,831	52,831	–
TOTAL REVENUE COSTS	1,255,237	670,235	914,768	275,533	1,010,704
Capital Grant					30,000
Grants for distribution					
Publishing Grants					2,327,646

Appendix 3

Publishing Grants 2024/25

Grants for Distribution 2024/25

£
2,327,646

Welsh-language Publications

	£
Programme Publishers	334,600
Individual Publishing Grants	82,000
Performance Payments etc.	0
Supported Posts and Training	221,680
Payments to Authors and Illustrators	321,500
Marketing	26,353
Booksellers	0
Magazines	343,000
Support for the Welsh-language Press	180,000
Vision from the Siwan Rosser Report	0

Total Welsh-language Grants **1,509,133**

English-language Publications

	£
Cultural Periodicals Grant	165,000
Revenue Publishers Grant	193,100
Individual Literary Book Grant	51,000
Small Magazines Grant	3,000
Training Grant	0
Author Advances Grant	50,000
Supported Posts Grant	119,600
Marketing Grants	36,000
Classics	0
Publishers Association	3,000

Total English-language Grants **620,700**

Administration 197,737

Total Grants **2,327,646**